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THE MINOR POEMS

(ANDHRA UNIVERSITY
INTERMEDIATE EXAMINATION, 1930.)

CONTAINING TEXT & NOTES FOR

TENNYSON: *Ulysses*

KEATS: *Sonnet on Human Seasons*

ARNOLD: *Sonnet on Shakespeare*

AND NOTES FOR

ARNOLD: *Light of Asia*, Book I.

BY

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As it has not yet been definitely decided whether the University is retaining 'Light of Asia' in the Minor Poems, we are issuing this book without it. We undertake to supply the notes for any selections in Minor Poems that may be prescribed hereafter for the Andhra University Intermediate Examination, 1930, free of charge in exchange for this coupon.

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Tennyson's Ulysses

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Introduction

I—BIOGRAPHICAL

Alfred Tennyson was born, the son of a country parson of old family, on the 6th of August 1809, at his father's rectory of Somersby in Lincolnshire.

The poet, his two notable brothers, and nine other children inherited from their father, Dr. George Clayton Tennyson, a soundness of mind, diversity of taste and vigour of constitution. 'The Tennysons never die' said the sister who was to have been married to Arthur Hallam, alluding to the family tendency to great length of life. Their mother Elizabeth, was a woman of tremulous and tearful sensibility and where the stern and dominating father lent his children a strength of mind and body, from their mother they inherited a great capacity for kindness and geniality. But genius was something superadded and inexplicable. The wind bloweth where it listeth. No theory of heredity will explain for us how the poetic genius arose in the Tennyson family. Alfred held out clear proof of the soundness of the doctrine that a poet is born, not made. With neither precocity nor a pose of infant phenomenon, the obvious current of the

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child's mind flowed on undiverted. There was no time of his life when Alfred Tennyson thought of being anything but what he at length became.

He was sent to school at the neighbouring town of Louth where between the fear of the master's rod and the bullying of his big schoolmates, experience but taught him endurance. But this rough experience at a tender age was not to last long. He remained only for two years at Louth, being taught for the next ten years at home by his father, who, we are told, was something of a poet, a painter, an architect and a musician. Here Tennyson made full use of the Rector's ample library which resulted in his earliest verses at fourteen, showing uncommon promise.

In 1826, were publshed *Poems by Two Brothers*, Alfred and Charles, which showed early enough signs of cleverness in metrical composition and descriptive faculty—the two great characteristics of the Tennysonian manner.

He had already acquainted himself with the beauties of Pope's *Homer* and Walter Scott. But his early enthusiasms were soon attracted to Byron, who had long been the fashion. Intellectual young men of those days not only read his poetry but imitated his gloom and his peculiarities of dress. But he soon put him away altogether, though he acknowledged him later, as one who gave the world another heart and new pulses.

Alfred and Charles went up to Cambridge in 1828, where they matriculated at Trinity College. But Alfred

found the surroundings 'disgustingly level' and as for the studies 'none but dry-headed, angular, calculating little gentlemen can take much delight in them.' The University had no prizes that he cared to win excepting great friendships. It was on his father's compulsion that he competed for the Chancellor's gold medal for verse with the poem on *Timbuctoo*. But he soon became one of the most remarkable men at the University, at a time when there was at Cambridge a more than commonly generous proportion of men destined for distinction in literature, in politics and in public life. He cast a singular spell on his contemporaries and Dr. Thompson had no difficulty in saying that 'that man must be a poet'.

His first poem *Timbuctoo* contains in embryo the three great qualities characteristic of his later verse, *viz.*, his delight in the picturesque and luxuriant description, his meditative power, and his manner of presenting ideas symbolically.

Meantime, while still engaged in his studies at Cambridge, his offerings at the shrine of the Muse were increasing in width and intensity. In a dull time for reviewers, when literature had fallen into a sort of backwater, when great books were so little expected that the world had almost lost hope of seeing any more of them, there appeared a small thin volume which made a great stir in a small circle. This was *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, a small group of descriptive lyrics such as were new to English Poetry, striking a joyous and playful note of a sort that even dull men might have delighted

in. Despite peculiarities and faults, we find here the outpouring of a generous, even gorgeous imagination. Many critics, however, tilted joyously against the obvious faults of the volume and were often blind to its surpassing merits. But on the whole the volume was well received and *The Englishman's Magazine* opened its page to Arthur Hallam, to praise his friend as much as he choose.

Close on the publication of the poems of 1830, there entered into the otherwise quiet atmosphere of Tennyson's life, the spirit of romantic adventure probably stimulated by memories of Byron and Greece, which involved him and his friend Hallam in the movement for Spanish Independence. Nothing resulted from this venture except that to the travel and his experience of the wild scenery of the Pyranees, we owe the inspiration of *Oenone* with its wonderful Greek paintiveness and its magic versifications. It was the influence of Keats that gave him this first plunge into the great region of Grecian mythology, and *Oenone* was followed by *Ulysses* and *Tithonus* of later years and the *Death of Oenone.* He returned straight to Somersby, having left Cambridge without taking a Degree.

At Somersby there was grief. His aged father passed away in March 1831, which event left the family in poverty. They were, however, allowed to live on at the Rectory where Hallam came and fell in love with one of the poet's sisters. Tennyson's second volume of *Poems* was published in 1832, and here it may be said for the first time the poet unlocked his heart. Here was

the real beginning of what another poet of large gifts called, "a great achievement which has left neither England nor England's speech as it found them; which is for all time a seal on these later days of England, and has taught her many-flowering tongue to blossom after new, unwithering ways." The volume gave to the world *The Lady of Shallott*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *Oenone*, *A Dream of Fair Women*, *The Palace of Art*, *The May Queen*. It was a thin little book of small camoes of song, exhibiting a vast wealth of fancy, a wide range of subject, and an extraordinary command of varied metres, that made one exclaim, "this language of ours, what can it not be made to say"? But critics again, like clever schoolmasters, had their eye to defects.

Lockhart's megaphone, *The Quarterly*, raised a storm of inglorious ridicule. But as in the case of Carlyle, of DeQuincey, hearty reception came across the Atlantic. "Tennyson is endowed precisely where Wordsworth wanted,' wrote Emerson in *English Traits*. 'There is no finer ear, nor command of the keys of language. Colour, like the dawn, flows over the horizon from his pencil, in waves so rich that we do not miss the central form.' On the whole here was a poet who promised not only to combine the cunning melody of Moore, but also the rich fullness of Keats and the simplicity of Wordsworth.

Whilst critics were busy with him, Tennyson went on writing more poetry; and then an immense sorrow came into his life such as was deeply to influence not

only his work, but the entire current of his thought. In the autumn of 1833, Arthur Henry Hallam died. Son of the distinguised scholar and historian, Hallam was twenty-two when he died, but already a man of note, beloved and admired. 'He was as near prefection as mortal man could be,' Tennyson said of him. To Tennyson for a while, the world seemed to be blotted out by the loss of his dearest friend. Never has human being been so touchingly and loftily mourned as in that incomparable elegy, *In Memoriam.*

Meantime poverty oppressed the Tennysons, and it was so great that at one time he had to sell his Chancellor's medal. He had also fallen deeply and most enduringly in love with Miss Emily Sellwood: but his impoverished circumstances was a bar to an immediate marriage. But for ten years he was engaged in the deepening of his temperament and in the perfecting of his art. Under everything else ran the strong noiseless current of *In Memoriam.* That epoch-making poem was beating its music out like heart-throbs for seventeen years. In 1842 were presented to the world two volumes of poems that were to lift him into the first rank of the world's greatest poets. In the first, much of his earlier work was revised, polished, chastened, rejected ; the second, commencing with *Morte d'Arthur* had new additions. They together created an amazement no less by their astonishing variety of subject and style than by the extraordinary beauty and the suppleness of their versification. The success was almost instantaneous, as was well-merited of the noble blank

verse of *Ulysses* and *Morte d' Arthur*, the perfect little song of grief for Hallam beginning 'Break, break, break," and the exquisite idylls like *Dora*, and the *Gardener's Daughter* which aroused even Wordsworth's enthusiasm and brought from him a letter saying that he had been trying all his life to write such an English pastoral as *Dora* and had failed. The fame, patiently waited for, had dawned at last. To professional critics he paid little heed and with increasing confidence in himself, Tennyson from this time forward steadily maintained his place as the best known and the best loved poet in England. But there was no way of relief to the poet's straitened means until Carlyle wrote to Monckton Milnes to obtain a pension for him. "Richard Milnes," said Carlyle in his stormy way, "on the day of judgment, when the Lord asks you 'why you didn't get that pension for Alfred Tennyson?' it is *you* who will be damned." The Prime Minister was induced to read *Locksely Hall* and *Ulysses* which thus brought Tennyson an annual pension of £ 200.

Five years more, and *The Princess* was published which introduced a lightness and suppleness into the Tennysonian blank verse. But mere felicity of style over a flimsy theme got condemnation from Carlyle and Fitzgerald.

1850 was the year of Tennyson's triple triumph. It was the year of his marriage, with Emily Sellwood.

> ' Her whose gentle will changed my fate
> And made my life a perfumed alter flame';

of the publication of *In Memoriam*, and his acceptance, of the Laureateship in succession to Wordsworth. The poem was published anonymously. But all the world knew the author. For who but one could draw the bow of Ulysses? More than anything else, one important consequence of the publication was Tennyson's beginning to get the upper hand in his protracted battle with circumstances,

Three years later, he leased Farringford, in the Isle of Wight, and settled in the first permanent home he had known since he left the Rectory at Somersby. He had lived out forty years of his life and for the remaining forty years of his life he lived like Wordsworth in the stillness of a great peace, writing steadily, and enjoying the friendship of a large number of people from the great Queen to the servants on his own farm. *Maud*, *The Idylls of the King*, *Enoch Arden*, and a few plays were the outcome of these happy years. He had also, in the meantime, bought land and built for himself a new house at Aldworth, in Surrey, where he passed some months of every year. All his loving labour of these years still enshrines his marvellous freshness and youthfulness of feeling, combined to an astonishing originality and vigour to the very end. The chronicle of his later life is very slightly markd by events except when increasing years brought ever-rising fame and public honours. In 1869, he was made an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1883 a Peerage was offered by the Queen, which, though successively refused in 1873 and 1874, was accepted under

Gladstone's advice. He took his seat, the first representative in the House of Lords of purely literary qualification, in 1884. He died very quietly at Aldworth on the 5th October 1891 with his family about him, in the moonlight, with his hand resting on his Shakespeare, open at the dirge in *Cymbeline*:

> Fear no more the neat' o the Sun,
> Nor the furious Winter's rages;
> Thou, thy worldly task hast done,
> Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.

II

HIS LITERARY INFLUENCES.

It is interesting to trace the literary influences on which the genius of Tennyson was nurtured. As a child he read Byron, Thomson, Pope and Scott. His early poems are merely Byronic exercises. He could improvise hundreds of lines in the 'style of Pope, and wrote an epic in the style of the northern bard. The poetry of the Romantic Revival had little influence on his poetic development. Of Shelley there is next to nothing; and apart from certain broad spiritual affinities he has scarcely anything in common with Wordsworth. To Coleridge he owes a slight debt as a metrist. But the influence of Keats is distinctly traceable in the Cambridge Prize Poem on *Timbuctoo*. He admired and revered Keats. The sensuousness of Keats, the delicate sensitiveness to external impressions and the atmosphere of pensive beauty that hung over his scenic pictures appealed intensely to young Tennyson.

For Shakespeare, he had the profoundest admiration as a writer of superhuman powers. His attraction to the charm and delicacies of metre would often make him say that Shakespeare was often greater in his sonnets than in his plays but he soon returned to the thought—which is indeed the thought of all the world—and said *Hamlet* is the greatest creation in literature.

Milton, he once called a pedant but soon came to recognise him as supreme in the material sublime, and that he was greater than Virgil. He praised Milton's similes and quoted with pleasure his liquid lines. It is clear he had studied closely Milton's metrical effects, admiring his pauses and the bold substitution of trochees for iambuses.

For Wordsworth he had the deepest reverence, and for his work profound admiration, yet not quite blind to its critical defects. He called him the greatest English poet since Milton and thought the line,

'whose dwelling is the light of setting suns'

almost the grandest in the English language, giving the sense of the abiding in the transient. But what touched him most in Wordsworth was the high sense of consecration to the poetic vocation and the depth of tenderness and mystery uniting in the deep consciousness of the Divine.

Of Byron and Shelley he wrote: 'however mistaken they may be, they did yet give the world another heart and new pulses,—and so are we kept going.'

Keats was the greatest attraction. The two had much in common. There is the same gorgeous profusion of ornament, the same lavish and almost riotous imagination, the same power of amassing luxurious detail. In his early work he was tempted to sacrifice the scheme of his poem to its accessories.

Not until he was thirty did he fully realise the primary importance of structure, the necessity of subordinating ornament to design. In his later work he realized this weakness of Keats and was beginning to free himself from the uncontrolled turbulence of inspiration. He envied Keats his high spiritual vision, his magic and the innermost soul of poetry in everything he wrote; compared the heavy handling of his workmanship to the exquisite lightness of the touch of Keats.

His *obiter dicta* on poetry illustrate his critical tastes. Of Ben Jonson, he said after praising some of his lyrics: "To me he appears to move in a wide sea of glue." Browning, he recognised, had a mighty intellect and plenty of music, 'but he cannot get it out.' His opinion of Matthew Arnold is valuable. Admiring him as he did, as a poet, after reading *Literature and Dogma* he sent this message: 'Tell him to give no more of these prose things.' Mr. Swinburne he called 'a reed, through which all things flow into music.'

He also read a great deal of the classics and particularly admired Virgil.

III

His Art.

Nourished thus as on the milk of lions, on the elevating and strengthening tenets of great poetry, with an ear trained from childhood to the music of nature and of the voices of the wind and sea, gifted with the instinct of the artist, and born heir to the great poetry of the Romantic Movement, Tennyson preserved intact this full, rich capital and never squandered it. "Poetry', he once wrote, 'should be the flower and fruit of a man's life, in whatever stage of it, to be a worthy offering to the world.' These simple words contain the key to Tennyson's poetry. Some singers, of whom Shelley is the prince, have sung wildly, impulsively 'like an Aeolian harp out of which the winds draw music because their heart told them to sing, as the full-fed thrush sings, on the high bare bough at evenings. Tennyson had this impulse to sing. Thought came to him in musical words. Put he was, like Wordsworth, a deliberate, busy, strenuous poet. He gave up his life to poetry as another man may give it up to politics or commerce. But he was aware that humanity in the mass regards poetry as a graceful accomplishment, as an amusement for a vacant hour, as the agreeable accompaniment of leisure. It is therefore one of the greatest facts of his art as practised through all the years of his life that it should have, whether weighted down with thought or not, expressed a certain metrical excellence, which, to the born artist that he was, came as the natural outcome of his genius. Without the

philosophical depth of Wordsworth, or the wild exuberance and careless rapture of Shelley or the passionate declamatory eloquence of Byron, his art from first to last, whether singing forth the spirit of English patriotism or conveying in ample wing the weighty philosophies of death and existence, is characterised by a transparent simplicity and directness of conception. It answers to Milton's dictum that 'poetry must be simple, sensuous, passionate.' Simplicity was the breath of his life and seclusion from the madding crowds gave it a tone of austerity. The thoughts and ideals of such a man emerging in the realm of beauty could not but have been impatient of complexity. His passion for directness and simplicity made him say one of the weightiest truths of human Faith and belief as if in a half careless note—

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Sensuousness, he had learnt early at the feet of Keats and kept on to it to the very end of his poetic career. But in the calm and tranquil surface of Tennyson's poetic waters passionate outbursts were extraordinarily few. Probably, *Maud* alone of his great poems is a glorious expression of the sheer ecstasy and rapture of passion. Yet most readers of Tennyson do not go beyond its glorious lyrics and fine felicities of phrase and diction.

His art then was simplicity itself and easily shows to gaze the 'mechanism of his genius.' Here we find everything free and open and we have no need to see as

through a glass, darkly. His is not the art of a Shakespeare or a Shelley where we admire the work alone without being allowed into the methods by which the artists have attained their result. But in Tennyson's there is no mystery, no magic, but the magic of self-conscious genius which makes no secret of methods. There is nothing which we can only attribute to an inexplicable inspiration of a heaven-dowered poet.

Whether or not we think of Tennyson as a teacher of morals, enunciating in song principles of action, with a bent towards realism and analysis of character, or as a teller of tales, touching life with pathos, we cannot afford to forget him as a priest of beauty, as a weaver of exquisite word musics, stirring the sleeping soul into ripples of delicious sensation; nor can we grudge him the insistent cries of the world, in the cause of that holy beauty of which he is the priest and minister.

"I would think of Tennyson," says an esteemed critic, "not as the man of rank and name and fame, the associate of eminent persons, the embarrassed fugitive from peering curiosity, but as the lonely dreamer lingering in still and secret places, listening to the music of woods, the plunge of stream and waves, the sighing of winds, with the airy music beating in his brain. This first; and then as heavily conscious of the deep and mysterious destiny of man, the bewildering mazes of identity, the bitter admixture of sorrow and pain with the very draught of life. He stands on the edge of the abyss and looks with faltering eyes into the dark . .

on the one hand beauty, the beauty that triumphs over the petty busy handiwork of man, and on the other mystery, the mystery from which man comes and into which he goes."

IV

HIS TREATMENT OF NATURE.

There is a very significant characteristic of Tennyson's poetry, *viz.*, the predominance in him of scientific perception rather than poetic imagination. "Browning,' says Rickett, 'wrote like a poet with strong scientific predilections; Tennyson like a scientist with a marked aptitude for poetry.' This tendency to scientific accuracy is nowhere more emphatically visible than in his treatment of Nature. He does not give the life of a Supreme Being to Nature and interpret it like Wordsworth in her august moods of thought and feeling. He does not look upon her with the ecstatic vision of a Shelley. But the varying and complex spell of her multitudinous moods as a whole has found no finer artistic expression than is given us in the verse of Tennyson. We find here a happy blending of his characteristic accuracy of observatian coupled to a delicacy of feeling. He has the strong apprehensive grasp of a naturalist in conjunction with the harmonising of faculty of a poet. He has studied the habits of trees and animals much as he has studied the character of his men and women. He has a striking microscopic faculty on which his poetic imagination works. His references to the vegetable world are quite as accurate as thoroughly poetic. He calls dark hair—

"More black than ash-buds in the front of March"

auburn hair—

"In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within"

the dragon fly—

"A living flash of light he flew"

He is never tired of reflecting in his poetry the physiology of flowers, trees and buds. He tells us how the sun flower "shining fair,"

"Rays round with flames her disc of seed,"

and most remarkable of all, in his *Idylls of the King* he thus dates an early hour in the night:—

Nigh upon that hour.
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
Of good supper in the distant pool."

He can also give us large effects, as in this epitome of an autumn storm:

The last red leaf is whirled away,
The rocks are blown about the sky.

It is impossible not to see that it is much more as a naturalist than as a poet, that Tennyson has mastered the materials. Never does his fancy carry him into realms of unreal imagery. "Everywhere, indeed, the observation of the scientist is glorified by the sensibility of the artist, the stark fact is clad in lovely imagery. Thus Tennyson's landscape are never vague; they are visualised with an almost preternatural clarity. And if the objective scientific touch is one feature

of his Nature Poetry, another feature lies in its atmospheric subjectivity. Tennyson never paints Nature with Wordsworth or even Byron, as something outside of man, with a life-spirit and purpose of its own. Nature for him is always a background for reflecting some human emotion; it carries a message or benison of its own, but harmonises with delicate adaptability to the mood of man."

He has a wonderful skill in creating a perfectly real and living scene—such as always might, and perhaps somewhere does, exist in external nature—for the theatre of the feeling he is about to embody, and yet a scene, every feature of which helps to make the emotion delineated more real and vivid. This remarkable power of putting nature under contribution is marvellously illustrated in his pure lyrics, as in the eminent example of '*Break, Break, Break*,' where Tennyson has found voice for a dumb wistful grief. An ordinary sea-shore landscape has been turned into a means of finding a voice indescribably sweet, for a dumb spirit of human loss. Again in the *Lotos-Eaters* the narcotised companions of Ulysses read their own feelings into the surroundings: while the poet suggests how well the dreamy languid atmosphere of the place chimes in with their feelings. Thus, in depicting moods of indolence, of sorrow, or love, he chooses such scenic accessories as may best accentuate these moods.

Thus, though actually alive to sensorial impressions, Tennyson went deeper and approached Nature through her scientific aspects as well. He discerned beneath

the shining surface of plain and hill, the unplumbed depths of molten tides. Where Wordsworth saw the bountiful lavishness of Nature in the leafy forest jammed with life, the meadow starred with daffodils, Tennyson found material for dark and troubled thought in the desperate waste of Nature, her heedless profusions. Where Wordsworth saw the stars as parts of the human environment, the lamps of night, the sentinels of dewy peace, Tennyson's thought climbed dizzily into the vast tracts of space, among the bushes of fire, bee-like swarms, of worlds. Science and especially astronomy were subjects of perennial attraction to Tennyson, to Wordsworth they were a profanation, a materialising of ethereal thoughts. The latter drew strong fortifications round the province of poetry and feared the invasion of science as he might have feared the attack of a ruthless foe. Tennyson boldly crossed the frontier and annexed for ever the province of science to the domains of poetry.

V

ULYSSES.

Ulysses was the last of the classical poems in the volume of Poems that Tennyson gave to the world in 1842. Here Tennyson imagines a situation in respect of the hero of Homer's *Odyssey* and in point of time relates to the post—Odysseyean period.

The *Odyssey* is the story of the wanderings of Ulysses after the fall of Troy and the victory of the Greek

host. Menelaus had recovered his wife, Helen, and she had returned with him to Sparta. The other Greek heroes had also gone home, all but Ulysses, whose wife Penelope with their son Telemachus waited with anxious hearts in his kingdom of Ithaca.

Ten years had passed since the sacking of Troy and nothing had been heard at home of Ulysses's fate. He had failed to bring his men back to rocky Ithaca, for they had perished through their folly in killing and eating the oxen of the sun, and he himself had been cast away on a lonely isle, the abode of the nymph Calypso. She wanted him to forget his mortal life and marry her and to that intent had kept him in her wonderous island all the while.

The next section deal with the wonderous adventures of Ulysses. The fair Calypso obeys the behest of Olympus and allows Ulysses to go; though she cannot understand why he wants to leave one who is so much better looking than his wife and undergo more hardship on the stormy seas. Agreeably to her fears he is again cast upon the shore of Phaeacia, unkempt and naked. He is met by Nausicaa who gives him cloth and food and takes him to her father's palace. The Phaeacians hold games and a great feast and give him presents. At the feast Demodocus sings the sack of Troy and the sally of the Greeks from the Wooden Horse, and Ulysses is so affected that he sheds tears which are perceived by King Alcinous, who makes a speech and says that the stranger ought to tell them his name. He tells his name, his home and his amazing adventures since leaving

Troy. He has sacked the city of the Ciconas; he has visited the land of lotus-eaters, he has met the fearsome one-eyed Cyclops, Polyphemus; he has visited Acolus; he has been to the isle of Acaea where Circe turned his men into swine; and as the climax of all he has descended into Hades where he converses with the ghost of his mother, of Agamemnon and of Achilles gazes on the mighty Hercules bow in hand and arrow on the string, wearing about his waist his golden pictured belt. After leaving Hades he had passed through the narrow straits between Scylla and Charybdis.

After he finished his story King Alcinous sends him to Ithaca with all presents. So we return with him to a work-a-day world where he must tread wearily to escape being slain with his son by his wife's suitors who have been eating him out of his house and home. Only his old dog recognises him at sight and cannot follow and fawn on him for he dies in the moment of recognition. Ulysses enters his house as a beggar and undergoes many humiliations, for unfaithful servants insult him and the suitors have little of that respect for a suppliant guest, which recognises that courtesy is the better part of charity; and is the most beautiful and homely thing in the life of the Homeric world. The irony of circumstances has its poignant moment when the destined, avenger, the inexorable and irresistible warrior, is treated as a vagabond while he is preparing his plot for the destruction of the spoillers of his household—men who are blind to heaven's warnings and insolently ignore the heaven-descended rules of hospitality. When the recko-

ning comes it is not a battle but a massacre; and the vengeance which Ulysses and Telemachus wreak on the unfaithful servants is an instance of the 'disgusting' which the Greek dramatists abhorred as inhuman, inartistic, un-Greek. Ulysses and Penelope are locked in one another's arms at last and Minerva miraculously prolongs the first night of fears and rejoicings after so many long years of hardship and sadness.

This is the story of the *Odyssey*.

Tennyson's poem takes up the story many years after the quiet ending with which the *Odyssey* closes. Many years has Ulysses lived in his quiet country home in perfect contentment and happiness. But the blood for adventure is up again in him and cannot for long be stayed. He is weary of his quiet life and wants to go out into the work again. And so after abdicating his throne in favour of his son he prepares to leave his home thirsting for adventure. Tennyson's poem pictures him on the eve of departure.

The occasion in which the poet here presents him is unwarranted by history or legend. Yet it is true to the character of Ulysses as we know it in Homer. The poem is an imaginative efflorescence of the character of Ulysses in after years.

'The stamp of character is so firmly set upon Ulysses that the mind of man has never since been content with leaving him to a home-keeping old age in Ithaca, and one would almost as soon believe that Napolean; might have settled down placidly in Elba or St. Helena.'

Dante was the first to take up the post—Homeric legend of Ulysses sailing away into the unpeopled world, impelled by an ardent desire to explore the unseen and unknown. But Dante makes him sail out even from Circe's island. On the other hand Tennyson's hero has reached home, and has given family life a fair trial, but he finds it so dull that he is soon driven by sheer *ennui* to his ship, proposing to sail beyond the sunset and return no more. He exhorts his old comrades, as in Dante, to follow knowledge and make the most of the short life remaining to them all. As a point of minor criticism, it may here be noticed that in taking Ithaca instead of Circe's island as the place of departure on this final voyage, the English poet may have forgotten that before the Homeric Ulysses landed in Ithaca, a solitary man, every one of his companions with whom he left Troy had perished by sea or land during the long wandering. But fidelity to the original tradition is of no account in a poem that is independent of time and place.

In any event notwithstanding this departure from Dante, the germ, the spirit and sentiment of the poem, as Churton Collins has pointed out, are from the 26th canto of Dante's *Inferno*. The following is a literal translation of the passage in Dante, and Ulysses is peaking:—

"Neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged sire, nor the due love which ought to have gladdened Penelope, could conquer in me the ardour which I had to become experienced in the world and in human vice and worth. I put out into the deep open sea

with but one ship, and with that small company which had not deserted me......I and my companions were old and tardy when we came to that narrow pass where Hercules assigned his landmarks (the straits of Gibralter). 'O, brethren', I said, 'who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the west deny not this to the brief vigil of your senses that remain–experience of the unpeopled world beyond the Sun. Consider your origin; ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge'......Night already saw the pole with all its stars; and ours so low that it rose not from the ocean floor."

VI.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POEM

1. The first thing we notice about the Poem is its peculiar form. Like *Tithonus* and *Oenone* it is in a sense a dramatic poem. It is spoken by another mouth than the poet's; and the occasion of its utterance is one that illustrates and emphasises the character of the speaker; and this kind of dramatic vividness is worked out not merely into the thoughts but into the style. Even in this dramatic form it falls into one particular class known as the dramatic monologue—it is a single speaker addressing—a type of composition for which Browning is famous.

2. The poem is also important for its personal element. "The poem was written," Tennyson himself

wrote, "soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and it gives the feeling about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*." He confessed to a friend that he wrote it under a sense of personal loss, but that life must yet be fought to the end and there was no escape by shirking. The poem therefore pictures a state of mind at once healthy in tone and masculine in its vigour and expresses a mood in striking contrast to the sleepy softness, and somnolent ease of the *Lotos Eaters*. The desire for rest is uppermost in the latter even as the desire for action is predominant in the former. The very dullness against which Ulysses declaims is made a virtue in the Lotos Eaters who ask—All things have rest; why should we toil alone? *Ulysses* extols a strenuous life and pictures it as an ideal even for old age.

Old age hath yet his honour and toil

"I have heard it said," writes StopfordBrooke, "that, in this poem, he drew the portrait of his own mind. I can well believe it, and it is a noble temper with which to step into the fuller manhood of middle life. Indeed, he never thought it too late to seek in his own art a newer world. Even at eighty years he took new subjects and tried new ways in poetry. The cry of his *Ulysses* was the cry of his old age:

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
* * *
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

3. We must also note that in *Ulysses* Tennyson is not giving us a narrative, but presents us with a type

of character. It is in this sense that the poem may be regarded as impersonal. As in all his classical studies he takes a classical subject and builds it up with one underlying thought, which running through the whole of the poem, gives it unity. He chooses a simple thought, common to all mankind; felt by the ancients' but to which he gives continual touches and variations which grow out of modern life and out of his own soul. This is the case with *Ulysses*, *Oenone*, *Tithonus*, and the rest. But the unity and simplicity of the thought, its mingled ancient and modern air, and its careful inweaving into the whole body of the story make these classical things of his unique. No one has ever done them in the sane fashion, and the fashion is extraordinarily interesting. So too does *Ulysses* present the man of action eagerly thirsting for a strenuous life, resolute, brave, adventurous. It is therefore independent of time and place: and we need not therefore quarrel with Tennyson of having broken away from the original tradition, by bestowing those mariners or Ulysses in his old age who all lay 'fathom-deep in brine'. As Lyall points out Tennyson might have felt that he was touching a chord in the heart of the restless Englishman who is seldom content with leisurely ease after many years of working and wandering abroad--

> The long mechanic placings to and fro,
> The set gray life, and apathetic end.

are not for men of this temper. Whether they are chiefs of a petty Greek island, or citizens of a vast empire whose frontiers are constantly advancing, for them it is true that—

All experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move;

and Ulysses is the primeval type of the indefatigable rover whose occupation will soon be gone when the uttermost corners of the earth shall have been explored. Ancient myth, mediaeval epic, popular ballads, retain and hand down the figures of such men, as they were stamped on the imagination of the times; and Tennyson's poem gives us the persistent character, blended with and accorded to modern feelings. And as Stopford Brooke pertinently remarks there never was a better description of the temper of the higher spirits of the Renaissance in Italy. We listen to the very soul of Leonardo da Vinci.

Thus in its central conception *Ulysses* not merely enshrines the pursuit of the ideal perfection, of the undiscovered land, a theme to which he again returned with extraordinary force in *Merlin and the Gleam*, but there breathes underneath it the wild attraction of the unknown in the deep Sea which he has again and again presented in *Enoch Arden*, in *Boadicea*, in *The Revenge*, in *The Sailor Boy*, in *The Seafarer* and so on.

4. Another noticeable element in the poem is the Nature touch, the description of the landscape. ' The scene is set on the shore of Ithaca, at the port. The time is evening. The moon is rising and the sea is gloomed by the shadows of the coming night. There is no description of the landscape, but enough is given to make us feel the time and place. Yet when Tennyson touches Nature in this poem it is done with even more

mastery than in *Oenone*; with extraordinary brevity and force. A whole world of ocean weather and of sea experience is in the last two lines of this:

All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me and alone: on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea:

The three lines which follow, are remarkable not only because the Nature in them strikes the note of that profound melancholy which lay underneath the intense and hopeless curiosity of the Renaissance—the same kind of curiosity which Ulysses feels in this poem—but also because the second line is one of Tennyson's finest examples of sound echoing the sense:

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs, the deep
Moons round with many voices,

But still the dominant interest here, more than in *Oenone* and *The Lotos-Eaters*, is the human interest—the Soul that cannot rest, whom the unknown always allures to action—the image of exact opposite of the temper of mind of the Lotos-Eaters.

5. One last thing to note in *Ulysses* is its excellent Blank Verse metre: it is by no means the least known about the poem. For visible grandeur, and astonishingly compact expression, wrote Stedman, there is no blank-verse poem, equally restricted as to length that approaches the *Ulysses*. Characterised by a severe and chaste simplicity, terseness and vigour of expression the style of the poem is well suited to the utterance of its central

idea. It marks the very perfection in metrical excellence to which Tennyson attained. Blank verse metre is made up of unrhymed iambic pentameters, or lines of five feet, each foot consisting of two syllables with the second accented. A slavish regularity would tend to insufferable monotony and Tennyson knows when and where to break the monotony of the rhythm by occasional introduction of the Trochaic foot where the accent falls on the first syllable——

> *Far* on the ringing plains of windy Troy

by varying the pauses in the lines, by the introduction of an extra foot or syllable and so on. Other decorative elements such as the trick of the sound answering to sense, alliteration, compound words and epithets, abound. And so we see in *Ulysses* the skill of the consummate artist in blank verse finding its triumph in the infinite variety of measured sounds which he can draw from a five-stringed instrument that seem so easy to play upon, yet is droning and tedious in all but a few hands.

These are some of the traits that have helped to make the poem so universally famed and admired. Looked at from every point of view it exhibits as under the glow of a golden sun Tennyson at his best both in form as well as matter. This was the poem which, according to Fitzgerald, Carlyle liked best in the volume of 1842. And Tennyson himself records "Carlyle wrote to me when he read *Ulysses*: 'These lines do not make me weep, but there is in me what would fill whole Lacrymatories as I read'". This is what Carlyle wrote:—

DearTennyson,—Wherever this find you may it find you well, may it come as a friendly greeting to you. I have just been reading your Poems; I have read certain of them over again and mean to read them over and over till they become my poems; this fact, with the infe-rences that lie in it, is of such emphasis in *me*, I cannot keep it to myself but must needs acquaint you too with it. If you knew what my relation has been to the thing call'd English 'Poetry' for many years back, you would think such fact almost surprising! Truly it is long since in any English Book,Poetry or Prose, I have feel the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same . . . . This is not babble, it is speech; true deposition of a volunteer witness. And so I say let us all rejoice somewhat. And so let us all smile rhythmically, all in concert, 'the sounding furrows'; and sail forward with new cheer, 'beyond the sunset' whither we are bound." The allusion at the end is of course to *Ulysses*, which Carlyle quoted again in *Past and Present.*

Carlyle's appreciation had more tangible results. For, Carlyle's solemn warning to Moncton Milnes, who had already been moving in the matter, that his eternal salvation would depend at the Day of Judgment on his ability to answer the question why he did not get a pension for Alfred Tennyson, appears to have been effective, for in 1845 the annual grant of £ 200 was communicated to him by Sir Robert Peel as 'a mark of Royal favour to one who had devoted to worthy objects great intellectual powers'. The minister was balancing

the claims of Sheridan Knowles, who was aged and had done his work, against the rising genius, when Milnes sent to him *Locksley Hall* and *Ulysses;* and it was the reading of *Ulysses* by Milnes to Peel, we are told, that determined the recommendation, which was made without any kind of direct or indirect solicitation from the poet.

Thus *Ulysses* is not merely an important stage in the development of Tennyson's art but also marks a milestone on the high road of his life.

VII.

THE CHARACTER OF THE HERO.

It were well to remember at the outset that Tennyson's Ulysses does not share very much more than the name of Homer's hero. Ulysses shows the idealistic faculty of Tennyson at its height. 'The wise and high-hearted prince of Tennyson's poem has little except his restless and insatiable activity in common with the crafty and wary materialist of the *Odyssey*, with his preference for tortuous diplomacy. Anyone who will read the *Odyssey* through in a candid spirit, will feel at the end that he has not been reading the life of a magnanimous or amiable man. He will not fail to admire the patient dexterity, the shrewd ability of the hero, and though his blood be set tingling by the spectacle of unconquerable courage, and by the stern completeness of his revenge, yet he will find little generosity or greatness in the character. He will rather

feel he has been dealing with a consummate man of business. Ulysses in the twentieth century would not be a soldier or a statesman; he would rather make a large fortune in South African mines.

But Tennyson's Ulysses is an idealist; with an intense and burning curiosity, a high adventurousness. It is the same transfiguring chance that in the ballad of *The Revenge* made a courteous and high-minded hero out of a very tough and unscrupulous sea dog.

But we need not quarrel with the poem on this account. It has none of the subtle analysis which Browning would have bestowed upon a character sketch, but it is great in conception and greater still in execution. The weariness of the settled life, the contemptuous wonder at the torpid content with which he is surrounded, came first—then there is the description, grave and affectionate, of the sober-minded son whose dutiful horizon is so tranquilly limited—and here mingles a certain shade of impatience at the contrast. Then the old ardour spring up, the thirst to steer again into the unknown, and the poem rises, strong and noble, to the matchless close, celebrating the joys of endurance, the glory of going on."

VIII.

PARAPHRASE

It is useless that I should sit idle as a king within the precincts of my quiet home in these rocky regions,

having an old wife as my partner in life, pettily administering imperfect laws among an uncivilised people, that spend their lives in saving wealth, sleeping and eating, and do not appreciate me and my activities. I cannot rest at home without travelling abroad: I will use the last minute that life has afforded to me. All through my past whether in pleasure or pain I have lived and moved in a more enlarged sphere of existence, whether singly and alone or in company; both in land as well as at sea amidst storm and rain. I have become famous a man with only a past. For always wandering over the wide worln with a mind eager to learn, I have seen and knowd many things—peopled cities, the manners and customs of various peoples, various countries, their councils and their governments—not as an obscure visitor but as an important personage honoured and respected wherever I did go. And I have experienced the thrilling pleasures of battle with foemen worthy of my steel on the resounding battlefields of windswept Troy. I have engaged in every action that I have known and was no idle spectator. Still the experience that we gather only egg us on to learn more, and becomes an arch through which we see the great unknown shining beyond which ever and ever eludes our grasp as we go nearer and nearer to it. How deathlike it is to sit still as if we have come to an end; and allow ourselves to rust unpolished instead of shining by constant use. It is as though we imagine that life consists in mere breathing. Even if one were dowered with a multiplicity of lives coming one after the other, even that space of time will be too little compared to the opportu-

nities that life affords for our accomplishment. And of the single life that I have been given, I have come to the end. Hence evey single hour that we properly utilise is released from the silence of the grave: nay, indeed, it is something more, it brings new opportunities in its wake. And it would be sheer wretchedness to bottle up and hoard my life like a miser and check the eager marching onward of my spirit anxious to pursue knowledge, as a mariner anxiously and quickly follows the setting star, even beyond the farthest limits of the khown in human knowledge.

Here is my son, my Telemachus, to whose hands I have resigned my sceptre and in whose charge I am leaning my kingdom—dear to me and possessing sufficient judgment and discrimination to carry out his trust, and by careful handling to civilise my rugged people and little by little enable them to appreciate and cherish the good and useful things of the world. He is without a single blemish of character, and capable within the circumscribed and narrow range of his duties to cultivate habits of kindness and charity and pay his due respect to the household gods, in my absence. He will look after the work that is his, and I mine.

Yonder is the port; the wind has already filled the sails; and beyond there lies the dark broad ocean. My sailors, you that have toiled and fought and thought with me, that always sportingly welcomed storm as well as calm with your open hearts and frank nature, we are old. Old age has yet got the work and toil ap-

propriate to itself. Death is the final end; but before it closes our lives something famous could yet be achieved by us, as befitting men who have fought against gods. In the city lights are being lighted. The day is passing into twilight: the moon is slowly rising; the ocean roars in a variety of sounds. Come, my friends; it is never too late to go forth new realms to conquer. Let us push out into the sea; and sitting at the oars ply them harmoniously together; for my determination is unshakable, to sail into the far west where we see the stars sink into the surface of the sea, until I die. It is possible that we may be caught in gulfs that might drown us: or we may go to the shores of the Blessed Isles and meet the great Achilles we have known. Though we have lost much of our old enthusiasm and energy, still there is more than enough in us to push on; and even though we do not now have that stregth that once shook earth and heaven, still what we are, we are—heroic hearts of even temper made weak in physical strength by time and fate no doubt, but still possessing that vigour and strength of will to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.

Ulysses.

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all to little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
  This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
  There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Notes

l 1 **It little profits**—It is entirely useless. It is of no advantage.

an idle King—much as Ulysses might have had to engage in the normal duties that pertain to a king, he still feels that they cannot exhaust his energies and vigour and is therefore liable to imagine himself idle: particularly so in one who after strenuous years of adventure and excitement spent in actual battle finds himself consigned to the dull routine of a peaceful time.

l 2 **this still hearth**—quiet home—hearth referring symbolically to the home.

barren crags—Ithaca was a *rocky* island near the entrance to the Corinthian Gulf.

l 3 **matched with**—married to.

an aged wife—the significance of the epithet 'aged' seems to be in the fact that he cannot find in Penelope an enthusiastic partner given to adventurous ways of thinking as himself.

I mete and dole—I measure out. The suggestion of the petty shop-keeper is intended to convey the contempt Ulysses has for his royal avocations, his administration of the laws, and his impatience at the kind of life he is leading.

l 4 **unequal laws**—laws not made in strict accordance with morality, but being evolved for every occasion as each arose, tended to be imperfect, arbitrary and therefore unfair.

savage race—semi-civilised people.

Probably Ulysses's characterisation is based on the fact that his people living in times of comparatively smaller human needs were more pronounced in their physical potentialities rather than in any intellectual or moral abilities. Surely they were not savage in the sense that they were cannibals. Indeed it is the emphatic contrast that an intelligent and intellectual king finds between himself and his own people innocent of the ideas of the mind and the soul.

1 5 That spend their lives in gathering wealth, eating and sleeping *i.e.* living little better than a mere animal existence; having no manifestation in their actions of the quality that distinguishes man from the animals *viz.* in the possession of a mind and a soul.

know not me—cannot understand me or appreciate my nature and temperament.

1 5 **I cannot rest from travel**—'cannot' is emphatic. It is impossible for me to stay at home any longer. I *must* go abroad in search of knowledge.

1 7 **I will drink life to the lees**—I will use every available moment of life that god has dowered me with. 'Lees' are the dregs or last drops left at the bottom of a wine cup after the wine has been drunk. Hence figuratively here I will use life to the fullest. I will not waste even the tiniest part of it "I will drain the wine of life to the dregs". I will enjoy life to the fullest possible extent.

1 7 **all times etc**—all though my life I have experienced fully both pleasure and pain.

1 8 **have suffer'd greatly**—For the series of adventures that Ulysses had to go through before he reached home, see introduction *infra*. In fact in Homer where each of the men has what is called a permanent epithet—a

famous characteristic of the Homeric style. Ulysses is always referred to as '*much-enduring*'. The *Odyssey* is still a by-word for continuous suffering and patient endurance.

l 9 **both with those......alone**—either alone or in the company of my followers. In some of his adventures as with the Cyclops and Circe Ulysses had his followers with him; and at other times as when he swam ashore to the land of the Phaecians he was alone.

ll 10,11 **on shore etc**—a very picturesque way of saying both on land and at sea.

scudding drifts—fragments of broken clouds *driven* furiously by the wind. Hence—through storm-tossed skies.

the rainy Hyades—the reference is to a group of seven stars which when it rose and set-was believed by the Greeks to be attended with rain. 'Hyades' itself is a Greek word meaning 'rainers', or those that bring on rain.

l 11 **vext the dim sea**—troubled the waters of the ocean and agitated its surface by causing them to rise in huge billows.

The lines are a picturesque description of a storm at sea.

I am become a name—I have earned great renown and *name* and fame. But Ulysses need hardly refer to his having become famous in a vein of complaint as he plainly does here. So there is more suggestion in the phrase. Since a 'name' has got to be achieved by noble and courageous acts Ulysses's fame must depend upon his past years of glorious fight. So Ulysses complains in effect, I am always related to my past, as if I can have no future. I seem to stagnate in the green waters of the past and am not thought of as having a future

before me. I must not therefore wallow in this old pool. I must go forward for achievements into the future. I do not seem to have an active existence in relation to the present and future; I seem to have completed (am become) my claims to be remembered and need not energise myself in the future.

l 12 For always wandering with a heart and mind thirsting for new knowledge and new experience.

l 14 climate—I have been through various countries and cities and experienced every climate.

l 15 Myself never being an insignificant being; *i.e.* always respected and honoured wherever I went.

l 16 "Have felt the rapturous joy of fight with worthy antoganists."

'With my peers' may be taken either in relation with drunk in which case the line would mean have enjoyed the highest pleasures in battle by fighting in the company of my equals or intimate friends; or in relation to battle when it would mean, having experienced the highest joy in fighting with my equals in strength and courage, with 'foemen worthy of my steel.' The latter is more appropriate. There is no joy in fighting and triumphing over an insignificant enemy.

l 17 A very famous line. 'Windy Troy' is another instance of the permanent epithet in Homer. Troy was a lone city around which the Greeks laid seige for a number of years. Hence merely means 'windswept city of Troy'; Troy with the winds beating over it from all sides.

ringing plains—The plains outside the city that rang with the din and noise of battle.

l 18 The line is capable of being understood in two ways. Firstly, Ulysses says he is a part of all, in the

sense that he had actually actively engaged himself or took part in the affairs of every country he had gone to without being a mere idle spectator; or secondly, that his present character is a compound of various elements, each of which he had drawn directly from his experiences. As if to say, everything I had seen or visited has left its mark on me by my having so intimately identified myself with every good cause that I have had occasion to come across.

l 19 Yet—For the force of yet we must go back to l 15. Much have I seen and known. I indeed know much, but there is more to be seen and known. What I have learnt is little compared to what I have yet to learn.

ll 19—21 All our experience is only intended to give us a perspective into the great unknown realm of boundless knowledge that always shines in the distance and which no man can wholly compass. The more we know, the more we have yet to know. There is no final limit to human knowledge and experience. It is boundless and nearer and nearer as we get to the horizon or the boundary of this untravelled world the farther and farther it recedes. Hence the true value of experience or the knowledge that we have gained lies in its enabling us to appreciate the great unknown beyond, which it is our duty yet to know.

The reference to an *arch* is significant in three ways :—

1 In the first place it suggests that there is no limit to knowledge [knowledge and experience are used synonymously] There is no blind wall raised in front of you which you can reach up to, beyond which there is nothing, and so complete your experience. It is an arch or an opening through which there is a perpetual vision beyond.

2. Secondly to look at a landscape *through an arch* is to see the centre and heart of it. It is a circular

boundary line that rivets your attention to the centre and therefore to the essential. The marginal irrelevancies are invisible. And so it is in effect to say,—As we gather experience we get to alter more and more in the right direction our view of life. An experienced man's vision of life is apt to be more wholesome and healthy than a man with practically no experience who is liable to lose himself in the pleasures at the frills ignoring the core at the centre. An arch therefore will concentrate attention, give the right prespective and so lead one on the path of wisdom.

3. thirdly, it is suggestive of a welcome arch that invites one to enter the boundless but indubitably delightful realm of ever widening knowledge. The experience of the past must be an incentive to experience the future. "It enhances the alluring vision of unexplored regions whose borders seem continually to retire the nearer we approach them". All that Ulysses has seen of the world only makes him desirous of seeing more of it.

1 20 **untravelled world**—unexplored region.

1 21 **when I move**—ween I walk up to it; when I advance towards it.

1 22 **to make an end**—*i.e.* of life; to imagine that you have done, when you have so much yet to do.

1 23 **To rust unburnished etc.**—The metaphor of a sword, which is allowed to rust by lack of constant polishing, which on the contrary must be kept dazzling by constant use. We must not therefore idle away our life, but keep it energetic and shining by constant *living*, by active engagement in the affairs of the world.

1 24 **As tho' to breath mere life**—As if life consisted only in breathing. True life must be actively, energetically and vigorously *lived* to the end.

Life piled on Life—a series of lives coming continuously one after the other without a let or break.

l 25 **were all too little**—would be too small a space of time to encompass the entire extent of knowledge.

ll 25,26 **and of one etc**—and of the single life that I have most is gone and very little remains.

l 26 **every hour is saved**—Every hour that is properly utilised and spent in right activity is so much saved from what would otherwise go into the silence of the grave.

l 27 **Something more**—It is not merely so much saved from sheer oblivion, but it is also the bringer of a new experience and therefore of more knowledge,

new things—new experiences.

l 28 **and vile it were**—and it would be criminal for me.

l 29 **For some three suns**—for the space of three years. [It is not clear wherefrom Ulysses got the idea that he will have life only for three years more; probably counting upon the average longevity of life in his time he counts upon having no more than three years to live].

to store and hoard myself—cf. l. 5. 'That hoard and sleep' etc.

="To take care of myself in quiet seclusion from work and action" as if any further activity would endanger my existence.

l 30 **This gray spirit**—This spirit of mine grown gray with time. This old spirit.

Yearning in desire—eager in its desire.

l 31 **like a sinking star**—a star sinking into the horizon. Even as a mariner of old who prides himself

by fixed stars would be anxious to follow up the direction of a particular star before it sinks into the horizon. Here knowledge is the star towards which and by which man is sailing in the ocean of life. Hence without knowledge man will simply be a vessel set adrift in the sea.

l 32 **Beyond the utmost etc.**—To follow it to the last so that I may come upon knowledge new and unknown to mankind.

l 33 **mine own**—repetition indicative of love and affection.

l 34 In whose favour I am abdicating.

Sceptre—the emblem of royalty.

l 35 **discerning etc**—possessing sufficient judgment and sagacity to carry out the task I have imposed on him.

l 36 **This labour**—this task of ruling over a rugged people.

by slow prudence etc—By prudent and wise measures introduced gradually into the state.

to make mild—to civilise the people.

l 37 **through soft degrees**—slowly, gently and gradually.

l 38 make them take a more intelligent interest in their affairs so that they may become more useful and better members of society. As they are at present they are too rugged to live a civilised life. But Ulysses expects his son by slow measures carefully introduced to make them pay greater and greater attention to the useful and the good in life.

l 39 **most blameless is he**—He has not a single blemish in his character.

centred in the sphere of common duties—entirely engrossed and wholly taken up with the common and normal duties of everyday life *i. e.* Ulysses means to say having no other external or internal distracting influences on his life and well versed in the regular duties of common life Telemachus would make a good king.

l 40 **decent not to fail**—Careful enough not to fail.

l 41 **In offices of tenderness**—In the discharge of his obligations to those to whom he is bound by loving and affectionate ties, as for instance in loving kindness to his mother.

l 42 And say his daily prayers to the household gods or the guardian deities of the family.

l 43 **He works his work I mine**—He will do the duties that accord with his nature such as the regular duties of every day life: and let me go out into the world to discharge the duties I consider mine.

l 44 **The vessel puffs her soil**—The wind has filled the sails and she is ready to go out to sea

l 45 **There glooms**—There lie gloomy and dark [gloom is used as a verb]

l 46 **thought with me**—Shared with me my hopes and anxieties.

l 47 That always gladly and playfully welcomed.

l 48 **The thunder and the sunshine**—The days of storm as well as calm, dangers as well as delights.

and opposed—and confronted or met them with.

l 49 **free hearts, free foreheads**—bold hearts and cheerful minds.

l 50 Even old age has its appointed work to be done and glory to be achieved. Don't imagine that old age is intended to be spent in rest and comfortable idleness. It has got its own duties.

l 51 **Death closes all**—Death is the early permanent and final giver of rest: until then we are expected to actively engage ourselves in duties appropriate to our age. Until death should come we must be labouring to achieve.

ll 51,52 But before Death should come something, some noble achievement, some stirring after fame can and ought to be done.

l 53 As befitting men who had contended against gods. In the Trojan wars we are informed the gods took sides, some helping the Trojans (Venus and Mars) and some the Greeks.

strove with—Contended against.

l 54 Ulysses is looking into the town and sees the lights being lighted in the houses amidst the rocks, *i.e.* it is now evening and night is approaching.

l 55 **the long day waves**—the tedious day is coming to a close.

the slow moon climbs—the moon is slowly rising into the Heavens.

Note how the line with its long vowel sounds long drawn out and tedious appropriate to the idea conveyed —a famous example of sound answering sense.

l 56 **the deep moans round with many voices**—Tennyson is particularly fond of referring to the voices of the sea. [see Introduction]—The sea is mournfully calling to us with a variety of sounds. Especially with night and darkness coming on the variegated noise of the waves

falling on the troubled ears and anxious mind of Ulysses makes him refer to them as mournful or melancholy; hence 'moans'—makes deep and hollow sounds.

l 57 It is never too late to go in search of a newer world: to explore new fields of thought; acquire more knowledge.

l 58 Let us push out to sea: and sitting at our oars ply them harmoniously and in unison.

l 59 **smite the sounding furrows**—strike the noisy waters *i.e.* ply our oars. 'Furrows' are the hollow spaces between waves through which as through a trench with high waves on either side the ship will have to pass; 'sounding furrows' are such pathways amid the waves splashing at the stroke of the oars.

my purpose holds—my purpose is unshakeable; it remains firm and I *must* go abroad.

l 60 **to sail beyond the sunset**—to sail far beyond the extremest west where we see the sun setting in the horizon.

l 61 **the baths of the stars**—the line at the meeting of sea and sky where the stars sink as they set, *i.e.* the western horizon.

until I die—I will go on sailing to the last day of my life.

l 62 It may be that we may be drowned on the high seas. The 'Gulfs' may refer to the 'yawning deep' generally or to huge whirlpools that will swallow whole ships.

l 63 Or we may reach the Happy or Blessed Isles with which was identified the Paradise of the Greeks. These are supposed to be the modern Canary Isles.

l 64 **Achilles**—The greatest of the Greek heroes in the Trojan War and the slayer of Hector. Ulysses met

and conversed with him in Hades during his wanderings (See Introduction).

l 65 **tho' much is taken much abides**—referring to their old age that was deprived them of much of their earlier strength. Though much has been lost, we do yet have sufficient strength and courage in us to carry us through the future. There is no need to despair and sit still.

l 66 **We are not now that strength**—'Strength' used concretely. We are not that glorious and strong body of men that we once were.

l 67 **moved earth and heaven**—performed wonderful feats of miraculous strength and endurance: made the earth and heavens reverberate with our glorious exploits.

that which we are, we are—we must now only find consolation and contentment in the fact that we do yet retain some strength and courage. We must accept our present position.

l 68 **one equal temper etc**—heroic hearts with the same calm and serene disposition in all of us.

l 69 No doubt rendered much weaker than what we then were in the days of our glorious youth and manhood, but still with a firmness and strength of will that will make up for the lack of physical strength.

l 70 An oft-quoted and noble line, expressing in a line all the noble and courageous qualities fo Ulysses.

to find—to discover undiscovered tracts of the world and to gather more knowledge.

not to yield—and never to make ourselves victims to old age and its idle and supine way of life: we shall not go back.

Matthew Arnold's

SONNET ON SHAKESPEARE

INTRODUCTION

I—BIOGRAPHICAL.

Matthew Arnold, son of the famous Dr. Arnold of Rugby, was born at Laleham, near Staines in the county of Middlesex on the 4th of December 1822, the eldest of nine children. A 'too curious' imagination might indeed be disposed to find in this birth of a child on Christmas Eve, that this child more than another seemed to presage the man—a person from the first of a very serious disposition, with an interest in speculative philosophy and theology and all the rest of those premanent topics that a critic of Arnold's work and genius is never beyond temptation to discuss and formulate. Among surroundings for which Arnold had a great attraction, especially the Thames for which from his earliest years he had a passionate love Arnold was carefully brought up under excellent parents whose characteristics he inherited. In common with his father he had great force of character and strength of will, was deep and genuinely pious and possessed a leaning towards classical scholarship, which in his father was sound and thorough. More than anything else the father's distinctive bequest

to his son was a high literary sense and a definite concept of style. But unlike his father, Arnold was excessively 'clever' and full of gaiety that he kept on to the end of his life.

While Arnold was very young his father had taken a house near Grasmere and it might be said that this brilliant and penetrating interpreter of Wordsworth grew up under the shadow of his master, whose great disciple and later counterpart he was to be. In 1836 he was sent to Winchester where he remained but for a year, having left it for Rugby 'to be under his father's eye.' It was at Rugby that he composed his first poem *Alaric at Rome* beginning with a motto from *Childe Harold*, which was recited in Rugby School on the 12th of June 1840.

In the same year, he won a Balliol Scholarship and in 1841 went into residence at Oxford. Among his contemporaries were his closest friends John Duke Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of England, and John Campbell Shairp, afterwards Principal of United College, St. Andrews. The latter describes for us the debonair gaiety of Arnold at Oxford which he never lost. It was also here at Oxford, "the home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties" that he acquired a deep passion for its life and surroundings which is to be found in full expression in his *Scholar-Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*.

In the year after his father's death, 1843, Arnold won the Newdigate prize with the poem on *Cromwell*,

proving another exception with Tennyson to the rule that prizes for poetry do not fall to poets. With obvious traces of Wordsworthian influence here and there, the poem in heroic rhyme, 'has flow and smoothness of numbers without inspiration or even distinction of style.' Even the earlier *Alaric* has more of the feeling for Nature which was afterwards so conspicuous a trait in his poetry, In his final examination for Classical Honours, though not a First—having been placed only in the second class—he was elected a Fellow of Oriel in 1845, when an Oriel Fellowship was still regarded as the most brilliant crown of an Oxford career. It was here that he became intimate with Clough whose death he mourned in *Thyrsis*.

Leaving Oxford, Arnold for a while taught at Rugby. But in 1847 he was made Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne, then President of the Council. On the 21st of July 1849 there appeared in the *Examiner* the first of Matthew Arnold's sonnets, published anonymously; and before the year was over he had brought out a volume which ought to have established his place in English poetry though it did not. *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems, by 'A'* made very small impression upon the public. The 'other Poems' included *Mycerinus*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *The Sick King in Bokhara*, *To a Gipsy Child*, *The New Sirens* and *Resignation*, and showed in the author 'a sensibility and an inward experience intensely moderate, expressed with a luminousness and a perfection of form that was purely Greek.'

On the 14th of April 1851, Arnold was appointed by

Lord Lansdowne to an inspectorship of schools, an appointment which he retained continuously for five and thirty years. The choice was well-merited and of all such Inspectors that had held posts he was easily the best, labouring devoutly in the cause of education for which he had an inborn fitness. Throughout his life he worked hard for a moderate salary, never complaining, and throwing into his daily duties every power of his mind. On the 10th of June of the same year he married Frances Lucy Wightman, the lady who for the rest of his life was the chief source of his happiness.

In October 1852 appeared *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems by 'A'* which with its predecessor contains most of Arnold's best verse. Yet the book fell as flat as the other and was withdrawn before fifty copies had been sold. The volume contained besides *Empedocles, Tristram and Iseult, Faded Leaves, Youth and Nature, The Youth of Man, Morality, A Summer Night, The Buried Life, Stanzas in Memory of the Author of Obermann* etc. In spite of its beautiful songs and occasional felicities of verse *Empedocles* offended in the eyes of its own author and it was Browning's insistence that gave it to the world again in 1867.

This volume was soon followed in 1853 by a new volume with, for the first time, the author's name on the title-page, which contained besides other poems published previously *Sohrab and Rustum* and the *Scholar Gipsy*. The *Preface* to this volume is famous as expressing for the first time Arnold's conception of poetry and its essentials. It is his earliest important publication in prose

written in his best and finest style, unmarred by the mannerisms and affectations that were so very much characteristic of the prose of his later days.

In 1355 appeared *Poems by Matthew Arnold*, Second Series, with two only new—*Balder Dead* and *Separation*. By this time though his popularity was not great, his reputation was assured. Even reviewers knew him for a poet.

1857 begins the most strenuous part of his life. On the 5th of May Arnold was elected by convocation to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. His biographer notes the curious fact that ever since the founding of the chair in I808 Arnold's predecessors had been clergy-men. All his successors were laymen. His inaugural lecture on the subject of the 'Modern Element in Lite-rature 'dwelt upon the close intellectual sympathy bet-ween Greece in the days of Pericles and the England of his own day. In 1858 appeared *Merope*, a drama on the model of a Greek Tragedy.

But the greatest fact connected with the Professor-ship which was extended for a further term of five years in 1862, is that the Professor of Poetry by a curious irony of circumstances, came forth as a great writer of prose energising his great critical faculties not merely in the realm of Literature but also in those of Philo-sophy, Theology, Morals in all of which he loved to dabble. His interests from his Oxford days were too many rather than too few. Narrowness was never among his faults. He was rather too apt to think that

there was no subject upon which an educated man is not competent to form an opinion. But this tendency to diffuseness never prevented him from dogmatising in a fashion which was peculiarly his own. But the one thing he learnt early and kept on to the end was the Platonic maxim—'Life without the spirit of inquiry is not worth living.'

His Professorship also did not prevent him from being sent twice to the Continent in 1859 and 1865 as Commissioner to inquire and report upon the state of Elementary and Secondary Education in France, Germany and Holland. He thus did great service to the cause of Education generally.

His works in 'the other harmony of prose' included *On Translating Homer* (1861), *Essays in Criticism* (1865), *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), *St Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Friendship's Garland* (1872), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1875), *Mixed Essays*, *Discourses in America* (1885) and *Esssays in Criticism*, Second Series, published after his death. Of these the works on Literature alone showed abiding merit and the *Essays in Criticism* are sufficient to place him in the first rank of literary critics.

In 1867, Arnold published *New Poems* which saw the republication of *Empedocles* and included *Thyrsis*, *A Southern Night*, *Rugby Chapel* and others. But the poetic vein had all but stopped in the middle of his life. Perhaps the critical faculty superseded the poetical, and the products of the former so far outweighed in

excellence his poetry that at the present day he is more known as a critic than as a creative artist.

On the 20th of April 1866 he resigned from the office of Inspector of Schools 'knowing his life was drawing to an end ' and accepted Gladstone's offer of a pension of two hundered and fifty pounds 'as a public recognition of his service to the Poetry and Literature of England.' He again went over to the Continent in 1885 to study educational systems, and the Report that followed was Arnold's last bit of official work. After resignation he wrote on politics, keeping his pen never idle. To the last his general health was good. While at Liverpool with his wife, on Sunday the 15th of April 1888, he ran to catch a tram car and died in a moment. He had gone to meet his daughter on her way home from the United States, and in the delighted expectation of seeing her he passed away.

II

CHARACTERISTICS OF ARNOLD'S POETRY

The Apostle of Culture.

There is a familiar adage in regard to Poets and Poetry, *that a Poet is born not made.* Tennyson, we saw, was half-born and half-made. But to Matthew Arnold was it given to falsify the truism to the last degree. With scarcely a line of his po try which is not richly worth preserving, Arnold's verse is often the result, not of the first intention' but of determination and judgment. His taste is so cultivated and his mind so

clear, that he is certainly an illustrious example of the power of training and the human will. Lacking the ease of the lyrist, the boon of a melodious voice, he has by a *tour de force*. composed poems which show little deficiency of either gift --has won reputation and impressed himself upon his age as the Apostle of Culture, spiritual freedom and classical restraint.

A Poet of the Intellect.

He is therefore in the main *a Poet of the Intellect*, with a spontaneity of intellectual processes that often lifts him over a mere lyrist. His head not only predominates but exalts his somewhat languid heart. As a consequence Arnold was to rise slowly and steadily in the estimation of the public, not shoot out like a meteor as Browning did, nor be the fanatic of young men at Oxford and Cambridge like Tennyson. He was merely a poet by vocation, but confident of the endurance of his poetry. "My poems represent," he wrote to his mother in 1869, "on the whole *the main movement of the mind of the last quarter of a century*...........I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, less intellectual vigour and aboundance than Browning; yet bacause I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, I am likely enough to have my turn."

The disciple of Wordsworth

In Poetry he was the disciple of Wordsworth of whose *Laodamia*, Hazlitt wrote—"It has the sweetness, the gravity, the strength, the beauty, and the languor of death; calm contemplation and majestic pains." The criticism applies to the aroma of the finest poems of Wordsworth's greatest poetical disciple. We may find it in the melancholy with which the sick King of Bokhara

broods over his fate ; in the gloomy resentment of My-cerinus against the unjust Gods ; in the despair of Empedocles on Etna at his failure to solve the riddle of life ; in the melodious sadness of the personal restrospects in *Resignation ;* in the consciously hopeless cravings of the *Scholar-gipsy* and *Thyrsis* after a reconciliation between the intellect of man and the magic of Nature.' Everywhere the spirit of calm contemplativeness takes the edge off the anguish and makes the poet's pains 'majestic'. "Arnold's poems are one long variation on a single theme, the divorce between the soul and the intellect and the depth of spiritual regret and yearning which that divorce produces. Yet there is a didactic keenness with the languor, and eagerness of purpose with the despondency, which give half the individual flavour to his lyrics. A note of confidence lends authority to his scepticism ; the tone of his sadness is self-contained, sure, and even imperious, instead of showing the ordinary relaxation of loss ; and the reader of his poetry is apt to rise from it with a curious questioning in his mind—a questioning after the origin of 'that severe, that earnest air,' which breathes through poetry of all but hopeless yearning and all but unmixed regret."

The Languor of Death in his poetry.

This noble seriousness, this strength and consoling power, this didactic impulse which marks all his prose and poetry, Arnold inherited from the great Doctor of Rugby. Intellectually Arnold descended from Goethe, the critic and artist, and from Wordsworth, the poet.

Both of them were marked with the same character of clear, self-contained, thoughtful, heroic egotism.

His air of Olympian dignity and Egotism

From both of them he learned to treat his own individuality with a certain exaltation of touch, an air of Olympian dignity and grace. Arnold always impressed on his poems an air of aristocratic selectness and conscious exclusiveness which Goethe claimed for his own writings. Unlike Tennyson's, his poems scarcely give forth a single note of popular grief or popular joy. With unwitting egotism, he attributes his inability to rise very high not to a deficiency in his own nature, but to the distraction of the age:—

"But we brought forth and reared in hours
Of change, alarms surprise,—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?
* * *
Too fast we live, too much are tried.
Too harassed, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

He falters upon the march, conscious of a mission too weighty for him to bear—that of spiritualising what he deems an era of unparalleled materialism. The pensive, doubting Hamlet of modern verse, he cries—

The time is out of joint ; O, cursed spite!
That ever I was born to set it right!

He yet 'feels that his poetic personality has a certain grandeur and meaning in it; that while h has something of Goethe's calm, critical eye for human life and its confusions, he has also something of the meditative thirst and meditative pleasures of Wordsworth; and

that the combination of these two poetic qualifications gives him a distinctive power of his own.

Hence the poetical reputation of such a serious, exalted, Olympic, imperious poet rests with the literary few and not with the pleasure-loving many. He is essentially a literary poet of great culture and not a popular poet like Tennyson. His poetry does not even sound to the depths of human nature like Wordsworth. He simply touches the fringes, the externalities of Victorian life and wrought with a cold and passionless hand. He has not the careless lyrical rapture of Shelley. He has not the impulse or *abandon* of nature for a pure lyric melancholy such as Shelley could pour forth in words that almost make the heart weep as in the noble *Lines Written in Dejection in Naples*. He however often hits a wonderful middle note. It is this singular equipoise between the doubts that devour him, and the intrepid sobriety that excites him to resistance, which gives the peculiar tone to Arnold's poems. This exact note is to be found in *Resignation*.

The Poet of the Literary Few

As such his poetry never attracted to itself popular worshippers. An American novelist called him 'A Victorian fossil'. A printer once remarked petulantly—'who is this Matthew Arnold, and how many more columns of him is the editor going to shove up!' In our own day his fame has been superseded by that of younger poets and to many Arnold in common with many things and persons Victorian, is a target for pleasantry. Even his poetic output was not large.

Like Gray, whom be greatly admired and loved, his poems are a slender sheaf. Though weak in morals and in interest his poems generally have excellence of finish. In his own day they were called 'sleepy melancholy meditations', 'indolent selfish quietism'. But his small circle of admirers sang his praise in full. Swinburne was the most ardent admirer: and Rossetti's diary for May 23, 1867, quotes Swinburne on Arnold—" He is more satisfactory as a poetic writer than either Browning or Tennyson.........His verse bathes us with fresh radiance and light rain......" Mr. Masfield once wrote—"I should say that all who care for English Poetry, read Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*, *Scholar-Gipsy*, *Strayed Revellers*, *Dover Beach* or the lyrics in *Empedocles*"

Those who seek emotional peace will not turn to Arnold. He is for the unflinching, and perhaps only for the strong. But he is honest; he never offers second best. Above all he can in things of the spirit lead from darkness to reasonable light. George Elliot once confessed that of all modern poetry Arnold's was most steadily *growing* upon her. Judged at its best, it is difficult to overpraise his work.

III

HIS POWER OF POETIC EXPRESSION.

Arnold's power of poetic expression is founded on a delicate simplicity of taste such as might be expected from the spiritual son of Wordsworth. With his finest insight into Greek poetry he has a highly cultivated ap-

preciation both for the specific aroma of words and for the poetical atmosphere of thought. Simplicity is the characteristic fruit of all these studies. His style is remarkable for its scholar-like delicacy and genuine simplicity of touch. He, however, had not caught from his fine studies of Homer the exquisite music of the Homeric rhythm; but had caught his clearness of atmosphere. This purity and simplicity of taste gave to his style an open-air freshness combining delightful variety with sedate majesty, as for instance, in the lovely picture of the Thamas scenery near Oxford in the *Scholar Gipsy* —a picture that is the perfect embodiment of "sweetness and light." But he hardly exercises the full magic of his power until he is in the mood in which some sad though calm emotion is the predominant thread of his thought and natural beauty only the auxiliary to it—*i.e.* —till he is in the mood in which his heart flies to his eyes. On such occasions, the verse has an inexhaustible beauty and force with intensity, simplicity and grandeur, all at once.

The music of rhymed verse always seems to bind him down to the simpler ranges of human experience. He does not resemble Shelley, who like his own skylark, sings the more sweetly the higher he rises into the rarified air of abstract essences. On the contrary, Arnold is always awakened to homelier feelings by the melody of verse and is never so lucid and concrete as when he has to meet the exigencies of a complex stanza such as he uses in the *Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*.—(*Ibid.*)

IV

HIS DEFECTS.

Arnold has little quality or lightness of touch. His hand is stiff, his voice rough by nature, though both have been refined by practice. His shortor metres are rarely successful. In the range of his affections he is restricted and a prosaic manner injures many of his lyrics. But his chief defect as a poet and artist is that the themes which interest him most are seldom living and organic wholes but are rather trains of thought sufficiently fascinating to the imagination and to the feelings but without definite form and organisation. His *Sohrab and Rustum*, polished and elegant as it is, is tame beyond measure. He has not the slightest touch of that animated sympathy and vivid suspense which Scott would have thrown into such a theme.

He generally does better in his elegaic themes. Here, Arnold could effect the greatest delicacy and modulation of feeling.

But he is often stranded on bare prose and compelled to leap back with a very jerky movement into the tide of his emotion. But from his highest moods of reverie he subsides by the help of some beautiful picture of scenery in harmony with the emotions he is delineating as in the lovely Alpine sketches of his *Obermann* or with some graceful episode of illustration like the beautiful comparison between the wandering Scholar Gipsy's dread of the contagion of our hesitat-

ing half-love of Nature which hugs the shore of artificial civilisation, and the old Tyrian skipper's wrath against the Greek coaster who troubled his realm by timid competition and yet never dared to launch out into the shoreless ocean.

The Sonnet in English Literature.

The sonnet is a form of lyric poetry well-known for its brevity and beauty. It consists of fourteen lines only—coming as the word does from Italian '*Sonetto*'—a little sound: and originally recited to the accompaniment of music—rhymed in a certain order peculiar to itself. Each line is an iambic pentameter, that is, consists of five feet of two syllables each, with the accent an the second syllable. It consists of two parts, the first eight lines making up an Octave and the last six a Sestet each with a different rhyme scheme. There are two chief forms of the sonnet in English—the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean. The Petrarchan, so called because of Petrarch an Italian poet in whose hands the sonnet rose to fame—is the orthodox type, *viz.* with the octave and the sestet, with normally a pause at the end of the octave. The rhymes of the octave are abba, abba; the sestet may have two or three ryhmes which may be arranged in various ways.

The Shakespearean form consists of three quatrains followed by a couplet. The rhymes therefore are abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The Petrarchan form with its limited rhyme scheme is difficult of composition and hence the

Shakespearean form came to be much in vogue. But various other modulations of the metre have been made in the hands of individual poets, and hence the two ancient forms are only of historic interest. Each poet has followed his own rhyme scheme, the only uniformity consisting in the number of lines.

Such a form demanding great ingenuity, is a means to an end—the end being properly that a single wave of emotion, when emotion is either too deeply charged with thought or too much adulterated with fancy to pass spontaneously into the movements of pure lyric, should be embodied in a single metrical flow and return. The pleasure therefore given by the sonnet is due to the fulfilment of the expected sequence of rhymes. So much for the form.

As regards matter, like the lyric it has a single emotion or idea expressed in rhythmic melody; and it differed from the ordinary lyric less in conception than in form—as any one may see for himself by comparing, say, one of Shakespeare's sonnet on love with one of his songs on love. The lilt and abandonment of the lyric are replaced by a more deliberate manner, a more austere treatment. There may be the same intensity of feeling, and an equal scope for fancy, but in one case it affects one like the scent of a wayside flower, in the other like the fragrance of a well-ordered garden. The whole sonnet is therefore intended to present a single emotion or reflection, either as flow and return in the octave and the sestet, or fused together, when the emotion surges on to

the end through three quatrains and is clinched by the couplet. There must therefore be an essential unity of idea properly balanced in its parts, for the form does not lend itself to a meandering and aimless flow. It must be complete in itself, and be the expression of one lofty thought or strong emotion.

The sonnet therefore originally lent itself for easy treatment as love poetry, but its field has been greatly expanded and it has now many uses.

The sonnet began to take shape in Italy as a special metrical form under Fra Guittone d'Arezzo, in the thirteenth century, but the greatest exponent of it was Petrarch who addressed a series of sonnets or a Sonnet Sequence as it is called, to the lady he loved, Laura. Arezzo perfected the mechanism; Petrarch and Dante crowned it with beauty and power. The sweetness of its music at length attracted the early poets of the Renascence, but they lacked the cunning to make it yield up its magic. Then came Sidney with his caressing sweetness. who showed what might be done with it; and from his time the sonnet swiftly passes from a metrical experiment into poetry. It was first introduced into England by Wyatt and Surrey in the sixteenth century and later extensively practised by Shakespeare, Spenser and so on. Particularly between the years 1593 and 1600 there was an amazing outburst of this form of poetry, and scarcely less remarkable than the fertility is the quality attained by a few names otherwise obscure in literature. The sonnet in English

Literature has had a glorious history, having been the medium of some of the noblest poetry of the greatest masters of the language including Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Mrs. Browning and Rossetti.

V

THE SONNET ON SHAKESPEARE.

In this famous sonnet on Shakespeare Arnold touches on the common theme of the great poet's inscrutable genius. It is probably the most commonplace of the criticisms on Shakespeare that there are many things about the man that we so very much desire to know but cannot know. For, the whole span of Shakespeare's life is shrouded in mystery: and certain recent fantastic theories have almost wholly denied the man his existence at least as the reputed playwright he was, and have tended to deprive him of his laurels for his plays and crown them on the brows of Bacon. For there are many things in his plays—indeed almost every line he wrote is—instinct with an extraordinary intellectual range and capacity with which the little that we know of his life does not accord. For one thing they presuppose in him a very high degree of education which we authoritatively know that he did not have. His interests have been wide and varied with the width and variety of the world: and yet we know him to be comparatively an obscure gentleman whose knowledge of the world went no more than from Southampton to London and from London back again. Yet he writes of Italian manners and Turkish customs as if he had spent decades in either

country. Greek and Latin literature seem so much a part of his mental make up, yet we have the high authority of Ben Jonson that he had little Latin and less Greek. At one moment he looks like having extensively walked the hospitals; at the other he is a lawyer to his finger tips. He is now Roman Catholic now Protestant defending either faith with passing passion. He was everything and nothing. These and other variegated strands of contradictory elements in Shakespeare's nature have put him in a class apart and mankind has agreed less from knowledge than from ignorance to regard him as a genius-a term which in its almost miraculous all-comprehensiveness is wide enough to explain every trait of human nature.

It is to this in scrutableness, the un-understandable quality in his nature, the mystery that shrouds him that Arnold refers to in his sonnet. Of other men and writers we know enough and where we do not know can ask them to let us know. But you are apart at a distance, to be admiringly worshipped rather than questioningly approached. And even if we were to question you, you in the height and depth of your knowledge and wisdom but smile at our littleness almost pettiness of mind and heart. You are always beyond our ken even as the high tops of Heaven-scraping hills, whose glory we cannot see. But it is certainly left to us to roam about the broad base at the foot, run round it, look about and above and still get nowhere near to understanding the glory of its height. Even so art thou and none can venture to guess anything about you, for there is nothing in your nature that

seems related to any external source or outside agency. But it is probably better to be so placed beyond the hustling haunts of men's thoughts. For it avoids all wrangle. Every toil and trouble, melancholy and misery to which flesh is heir have found its supreme expression at your hands, and it is that that crowns you with the laurels of victory.

This in the main is the substance of Arnold's sonnet and Professor Saintstury whose authority to speak as a literary critic is at least deserving of respect, testifies to the great merit that the sonnet possesses and adds by way of safety that 'there can be no contraversy about it among the competent'. 'Almost adequate' is in such a case the highest praise and it must be given' But one is not sure if Saintstury did not go perilously near the edge of extravagance in his praise. Indeed there will be many more of the equally 'competent' who will wholly agree with Arnold's biographer Mr. Paul, that Arnold might have thought twice before he meddled with a subject like Shakespeare. He is of opinion that 'it may be considered a proof rather of Mr. Arnold's courage than his discretion that he should have written a sonnet on Shakespeare." Most dispassionate critics will agree with this verdict, for there are many obvious defects in the sonnet both in idea and in expression.

1. In the first place the central idea as we have elucidated it elsewhere is hardly a fit subject as an appreciation of Shakespeare. No single sonnet can ever do justice to Shakespeare's genius: and the idea that

none can know much about him is not quite happy to be enshrined in a poem of this type.

2. A second obvious defect is the absolute vagueness that permeates it. What was the particular thing that Arnold had in mind when he wrote his sonnet. Did he think of the man or his plays, his nature or his understanding. We can at best guess and do no more.

3. Thirdly even the central idea, flimsy and unhappy as it is, is not fully worked out. That Shakespeare's genius is beyond our comprehension is hardly praise: but it is worse in Shakespeare that he should foil our attempts to understand him,As to which Arnold admires we do not know. And there is a sad falling off in the last lines where Arnold after talking about the man he does not know, suddenly jumps to the universal quality of his tragedies that has brought him his Laurels. This is from the man to his art, and the transition is most unnatural and jilted.

Fourthly, and this is an important matter, Arnold does not enter into his subject with that passionate frankness and loving appreciation as for instance we unmistakably feel in Keats's *Sonnet on Chapman's Homer.* He is yet too much of a critic, yet a good deal of the schoolmaster to get to loving appreciation' with any suggestion even of passionate intensity. How coldly and in a manner of detachment he touches his subject as if with a pair of tongs standing at a distance! This is because he was a critic to the marrow of his bones, to the tips of his fingers. As one

famous critic says of him: "In his verse he is a critic of life—in the abstract; in his prose a critic of life—in the concrete; but a critic always; urbane, and detached" —qualities not always virtues. The national idolatry of Shakespeare he might not have shared: but he should not have lacked the genuineness and sincerity in thought and feeling. At any rate he might have spared Shakespeare the schoolmaster touch of condescension and patronage. And we must not forget that as a whole the sonnet does not taily with Arnold's estimate of Shakespeare as expressed in prose, though even that too was much qualified.

5. And lastly there is no ringing music or modulated rhythm in the verse and the tenth line is particularly bad—a defect which Arnold himself would have put his finger on, if he had found it in others. And it is is neither good criticism nor good poetry.

But the only redeeming feature in the sonnet is the simile that fills the middle of it which is a piece of imagery unsurpassed in the whole range of Arnold's poetry.

PARAPHRASE

Other poets submit to our questionings: but you do not. Even though we may go on asking you, you only smile and remain silent, always standing out of the bounds of our little knowledge. For the tallest mountain, whose glorious peak is laid bare only to the sight of the stars, firmly rooted in the depths of the sea, and lives only in the highest region of the Heavens,

permits to human sight only the dim and obscure boundaries of its base for the satisfaction of the baffled efforts of man. But you who were familiar with the utmost regions of the sun and the stars, did depend on none but yourself for your knowledge, education, honour and strength; and hence your life on this our earth was wholly shrouded in mystery. But it is better far to be so than to be too intimately known. All the sorrows that our immortal spirits have to endure, all the defects that drain our strength, all the miseries that bow a man down under their weight have found a trumpet in your noble tongue and a beacon in your glorious brain.

SHAKESPEARE.

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill
That to the stars nncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality:
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness that impairs, all griefs that bow,
Find their sole voice in that victorious brow,

Notes.

1 1 **Others**—other poets and men of letters.

abide our question—tolerate our desire to know more about them.

Thou art free—You are absolutely beyond our questions; will not tolerate our itching desires to gain more accurate knowledge of you.

1 2 **We ask and ask**—We persist in our questions.

Thou smilest and art still—All that our questions evoke in you is a smile of mingled contempt and pity at our littleness and ignorance, and you remain immovably silent, as if you take a pleasure in putting us off and leaving us to wallow in our doubts.

1 3 **out topping knowledge**—Standing beyond the utmost reaches of our intelligence.

14 **That to the stars etc.**—that exhibits its glorius peak only to the stars. It is only the stars in the heavens that can see its bared head.

uncrowns his majesty—makes its naked beauty and glory visible.

1 5 **steadfast footsteps**—the base firmly rooted and established.

in the sea—i. e. rising from out of the depths of the sea.

l 6 **The Heaven of Heavens**—the highest regions of the skies.

ll 7, 8, allows a sight of its base only, to the mortal who has been baffled and disappointed in his efforts to see the peak and crowned head.

l 7 **cloudy border**—'cloudy' in the sense of obscure, insignificant, immaterial, unimportant.

[It is not clear how the mortal can see the base of the hill if it should rise from out of the depths of the sea. The base in this case would be entirely absent from view.]

l 8 **the toiled searching**—The search or the anxiety to see its peak that has been toiled or baffled.

mortality—human beings or men,

l 9 **who didst the stars and sunbeams know**—who had reached up to the pinnacle of Heavenly heights; got familiar with the regions of the sun and stars. That is to say, who had soared into the highest regions possible to human intellect and was conversant with the sublimest thoughts and ideas, and therefore out of reach of the common mortal's ordinary intellect.

l 10 One of the most unpoetical lines in the poem Arnold intends to say that Shakespeare was indebted to no external agency in the acquiring, ordering and disciplining of his powers.

self-school'd—Not merely in the sense of self educated, but self disciplined.

self-scann'd—scrutinising and examining the facts of the world to assimilate the good and reject the bad, all by yourself unaided by anybody else.

self-honour'd—having *achieved* your honour. Shakespeare himself says in *Twelfth Knight* that there are three kinds of persons in this world—those that are born with honour; those that achieve it; and those that have honour thrust upon them. Shakespeare belonged to the noble second class. He depended on no court patronage or royal benefaction.

Self-secure—secure in thine own strength: not depending on others either for your fame or your livelihood.

1 11 **unguess'd at**—with none of us being able to guess at the secrets of your greatness. It may here be pointed out that the simile of the heaven pinnacled mountain does not so much enforce a comparison as a contrast. Both of them have their being in the heavens. But the border of the mount ain's base is still visible though cloudy. But Shakespeare's life on earth we are unable to know. Arnold's gives us the reason. If the mountain peak reigns in Heaven its base must be rooted to the earth. But Shakespeare had no known relations with the men of this earth on which depended his greatness, honour, or strength If he had been indebted to this or that patron, if he had expected support from this or that person we might possibly have known more about him from the history of the persons on whom he depended. But for everything he never went outside

himself, and hence we cannot even guess how he lived or what manner of man he was with any passing degree of accuracy. This is the contrast between the mountain whose base is rooted to the earth and therefore visible and understandable and Shakespeare who wholly soared in the Heavens and stopped on the heights and hardly seemed to have a touch of the earth about him. So he leaves us futilely *guessing* where otherwise we ought to have *known*.

l 11 Better so—Arnold adds it is certainly better to be so, *i.e.* entirely unknown. But on what grounds and why Arnold's greatness in turn leaves us futilely guessing? Why is it better that we should confess defeat before the altar of Shakespeare's life and fame? Probably Arnold felt that the greatness of Shakespeare would be left unimpaired if he would be left alone and kept at a distance from us: for familiarity would here too lead to contempt. For instance much of the poetry of Byron would have been spared the derisive criticism that it is so fashionable to shower upon it if we had known nothing at all of his erratic and in many ways unbecoming life. So now Shakespeare is safe. It is a case of more knowledge being dangerous, for then it would lead to a good deal of wrangling about his deserts.

l 12 The reference in the three last lines is to Shakespeare's Tragedies which in their supreme excellence have not merely attained to their own immortality but have made Shakespeare's extraordinary fame possible. The emphasis is on 'All'. The range of Shakespeare's mind was universal; he painted not one aspect

of human nature but the *whole* of it. And this could be said of no other poet.

l 12 All the sorrows and sufferings to which our soul has to submit by reason of its fleshly coil, and which it cannot escape even if it were to try.

l 13 **All weakness that impairs**—All human frailties that make an inroad upon our strength and honour,

all griefs that bow—All these excessive sorrows which bend even the straightest of men to the dust, in their unbearable weight.

l 15 Find their only and magnificent expression at your hands.

that victorious brow—that forehead which has been crowned with the laurels of literary triumph.

John Keats
The Human Seasons.

INTRODUCTION
BIOGRAPHICAL

The wind bloweth where it listeth; and genius is a wild flower that blossoms in strange crannies. An ostler who married his master's daughter, acquired the business of his father-in-law and set up at the Swan and Hoop, Finsbury Pavement. Such was the poet's progenitor, and in the atmosphere of a thriving inn was the author of Endymion born on the last day of October 1795. As a boy Keats was a bright, enthusiastic youth, shy and reserved at times, but in the company of friends sane and cheerful and vivacious. Though disease sapped his energies later he was to the last braveand stoical. He did not show any special intellectual interests and was neither a dreamer like young Coleridge nor a vivacious reader like the youthful Morris. Then suddenly in his fourteenth year the mind woke up and he gave to his books the energy and zest he had before bestowed on games. He read all day and classical antiquity especially appealed to him, and even the some-

what arid charm of Lemprierie's *Classical Dictionary* held him in thrall. His parents died while he was still a lad, and his guardians took him from school at the age of fifteen and apprenticed him for five years to a surgeon. But his heart was not in the problems of compound fractures, but in literature, and his leisure time was devoted to his books.

A notable event of this time was his reading of the *Fairie Queene* which so utterly possessed his imagination that his earliest poetic effort was to imitate his master. Thus did he begin to find his powers; and later on when his poetic apprenticeship was past, achieved one of his greatest successes with the Spenserian stanza in *The Eve of St. Agnes.*

In the spring of 1816 we find him a "a dresser, at Guy's Hospital, but he soon gave up all thought of a medical career, and devoted himself to literature, Spenser had been his first enchanter, the second was Homer. It was after poring over Chapman's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with fascinated delight, that he wrote his famous sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*—amazing verses by a poet who was a mere boy.

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
>   When a new planet swims into his ken,
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
>   He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise
>   Silent upon a peak in Darien.

Keats had by this time found himself in a circle where great spirits abounded. Wordsworth and Lamb and Leigh Hunt met the young enthusiast, and each in

his own way fed the poetic enthusiasm. About this time he met also Shelley, but did not take to him so unreservedly as he had done to the others. Shelley on the other hand was greatly struck by Keats, and his admiration for the poet impelled him to one of his supreme inspirations—*The Adonais*-years afterwards when the tragedy of Keat's life had closed.

After publishing his first volume of verse Keats went to the Isle of Wight: but he soon returned to London for the stimulus of friendly intercourse, and at the close of the year had completed the first draft of *Endymion*—the poem beginning with the famous line—

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever

The reception of the poem was unfavourable. Keats, always sensitive, and at this stage beginning to feel the onset of the disease that finally overwhelmed him, took the savage on slaught of the critics deeply to heart. But it is a mistake to think that he was killed by criticism-"sunffed out by an article"; deeply as he resented the gross unfairness of the attack, he soon took their snarlings at their proper valuation.

But misfortunes accumulated. In 1818 his brother Tom died of consumption, while his other brother George emigrated to America. Keats himself fell ill and never recovered fully from the fever that had ravished him. Yet in this and the next year he wrote some of his greatest poems; for while his body was wasting away his imagination was becoming more vital, his creative power more wonderful. The love affair with

Fanny Brawne came at a time when his nerves were already strained to breaking point by physical frailties, so that the letters to that young woman, on which the popular estimate of Keats' character is largely based, must be taken as showing the poet at a special disadvantage, and in no way expressing his naturally virile and courageous self.

In February 1820 he caught a chill and spat blood. "I know the colour of that blood," he said to a friend, " it is arterial blood......that drop of blood is my death warrant—I must die."

A slight rally following upon a change of air heartened his friends, but a relapse soon followed, and the doctor warned him that to winter in England would be fatal. Quietly and resolutely he made plans to travel with a friend Joseph Severn, and on September 8 set sail from Gravesend to Italy. Early in 1821 he passed away, in the arms of his loyal and tender hearted friend Severn; and found his last resting-place in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome. The inscription on the grave is of his own devising.

"Here lies one whose name is writ in water"

The lovely, touching words are idle. That name is written, not in water, but on the everlasting rock of Time.

II

THE APOSTLE OF BEAUTY.

Each of the great romantic poets stands in a special attitude with regard to the revelation of a beauty in

Nature forgotten in the earlier century. "To Wordsworth belongs preemiently the achievement of bringing man into communion with the spirit of Nature and defining the power of Nature to teach, console and heal. Shelley found in the fleeting manifestations of earthly beauty a perpetually changing reflex of a constant ideal, the intellectual and immortal beauty to the pursuit of which his life was dedicated. Byron, far less profound and original in thought than Wordsworth or Shelley, used his special gift of fiery and headlong eloquence to fuse human passion with the elemental forces of Nature and in so doing appealed to a wider audience than it was possible for loftier and less wordly intelligences to find. Coleridge clothed the phantom of a romantic imagination in charmed phrases which gave them a visible shape and being. Scott gave new life from a mind stored with history and legend, to the doings of a bygone order of society.

Keats stands by himself in his devotion to the concrete beauty of things. To Wordsworth each aspect of Nature was special manifestation of a single power or being which dwelt in everything alike, to which the splendour of the setting Sun and the evelasting murmur of the sea were equally related. To Shelley these things, beautiful indeed, were but the unsubstantial evidence of a remote and unchangeable reality. To Keats, the third of the great triumirrate of poets of Nature, each natural object, each change of colour in sky or sea, was lovely for its own sake and had its separate individuality. Each embodied some myth, was the home of some god

like form. His intoxication with the beauty of the world is expressod in an exclamation of his, "O,for a life of sensation rather than of thoughts." The opening lines of Endymion declare his passion for each shape of beauty that crossed his path, and its power to alleviate the depression and despondency which the less agreeabls aspects of life provoked. His philosophy is summarised in the concluding lines of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn.*

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

This devotion to the impression of the moment, in a mind ever on the watch of such impressions, was responsible for the copiousness and want of restraint which is conspicuous in his earlier verse. *Endymion* is so crowded with passages of sensuous description, prolonged by the writer's delight in his task, that the need of relief form so sustained an orgy of beauty must be felt by every reader. With experience he learned to give variety to the current of his poetry, but the power of sensation over his mind remained undiminished. Beautiful things exist to give pleasure and content. It was his aim to make his verse a permanent record of the pleasure and content which he himself had found in them. His highest pleasure was in poetry itself. And, while he made his own verse the vehicle of his sensations, the ideal necessary for the achievement of high poetic rank became to him the attainment of that perfection which should place his work among those things of beauty which are joys for ever."

III

THE SONNET ON THE HUMAN SEASONS

In passing from the sonnet of Arnold to that of Keats we pass almost from the depths to the pinnacled heights of the regions of poetry. Almost all of Keats' sonnets are composed on the Shakespearean model of three quatrains and a couplet, and not on the Italian. But the suggestion of the Shakespearean quality is found in other striking resemblances in addition to that of mere form.

(2) Though not here in the *Human Seasons* most of his opening lines suggest the Shakespearean manner. *e.g.* When I have fears that I may cease to be—

(3) The ending couplet is especially Shakespearean. The rhythm, too, of the concluding couplet in the *Human Seasons* seems the very echo of the lines that end sonnet 87 of Shakespeare.

> "Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
> In sleep a king, but waking no such matter

(4) The rhythm is a peculiarly stately iambic.

(5) The rich imagery and (6) The Richness of language. Matthew Arnold himself in applying the epithet 'Shakespearean' to the work of Keats, explicitly explains that he does not mean 'imitative of Shakespeare' but possessing 'that rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness of which Shakespeare is the great master.'

The sonnet that imagines the span of human existence as a year with its four clearly marked seasons

of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter has an obvious parallel in the famous speech of Jacques in *As You Like It* II, 7, where 'the misanthropic non-combatant in the battle of life' declaims on The Seven Ages of Man dividing his life into infant, school-boy, lover, soldier, Judge the dotard, and finally Decrepit age—second childishness, and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste,sans everything. This Division of man's life has had a much earlier history, having been adopted even in ancient Greece by Proclus, Hippocrates and so on.

The *Human Seasons* also suggests a comparison with some of Shakespeare's sonnets on the passing of the seasons of the year. Keats' division is the simplest and is evolved in the region of the development of man's intellect and it should be noted it is dictated by a frank pleasure in existence rather than by any cynicism as of Jacques.

IV

PARAPHRASE.

There are four seasons that complete the year. Even so are there four distinct stages of development in the mind of man. He has vigorous and healthy spring time, when his faculty of imagination is clear and strong and enables him to appreciate the beauties of the earth very easily within a short space of time.

Man then grows up to his summer time when he begins to sit and think over the honeyed pleasures that

he has gathered as a youth, and by means of such deep thinking gets neasest to the gods.

Meantime Autumn has come over him and then he closes his wings: withdraws himself from active life into his own quiet home and his outlook on life gets thick and misty and he is content idly to look on at the passing show of life, without paying any attention to the beautiful things of life even as he would allow the familiar stream at his door to pass by unnoticed.

Then comes on winter which alters his face of ruddy freshness to an ugly paleness—the touch of Death —for otherwise he will escape his mortal nature which makes of Death a necessary end.

THE HUMAN SEASONS.

Four seasons fill the measure of the year;
There are four seasons in the mind of man.
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span:

He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves
To ruminate, and by such dreaming high
Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
He furleth close; contented so to look
On mists in idleness—to let fair things
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.

He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

Notes.

1 1 **Four seasons**—Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

fill the measure of the year—fill up the entire amplitude or the full length of the year. The year is made up of these four seasons.

1 2 **in the mind of man**—Even so does man's intellectual development pass through four important stages from its first throb of life to its death.

1 3 **lusty spring**—a healthy and vigorous spring time.

fancy clear—his undimmed imagination or unsophisticated brain—a brain which has not had the withering touch of life.

1 4 **Takes in all beauty etc.**—enthusiastically appreciates and drinks deep at the fountain of earth's beauty. Every phase and form of life appears pleasant and cheery. There seems to be no such thing as the ugly or the repulsive in the sights and scenes of earth. That is to say in our high-spirited enthusiasm we are apt to look at everything in its brightest aspect.

with an easy span—within a short space of time: with absolutely no difficulty.

l 5. **luxuriously**—taking intense pleasure and joy in thinking and dreaming over his earlier impressions and sensations.

l 6. **spring's honey'd cud etc**—The metaphor is that of ruminating as of a bull. When it grazes it hastily stuffs in everything that it bites into what is called its 'first stomach' and then when the grazing is over, it sits comfortably in the stable and withdraws the bites from out of the stomach little by little and after careful chewing sends them down into the stomach proper in the most easily assimilable form.

Even so according to Keats is the development of man's mind. In his youth he takes in all impressions indiscriminately in the sheer joy of acquisition. He has no notion of relative values. It is only when he develops into manhood that the thinking faculty begins to predominate in him and there slowly enters the sense for values. He ruminates over his earlier impressions when he finds them impoverished of much of their early glories and then he gets to assimilate them and make them his known. This is the way in which mere impressions and sensations pass to the region of real knowledge.

.springs honied cud—The first food which was all sweet ; youthful impressions of uniform pleasantness and sweetness which have not yet come under the influence of thought.

honey'd—To form an adjective from the substantive by the addition of a participial suffix is a favourite

device among poets, against which Johnson had protested. Cf. Squadron'd angels (Milton); 'Honied spring' (Gray); legion'd rooks (shelley).

l 7. **ruminate**—not merely in the sense of ruminating or chewing the cud as an annimal but in the additional sense of 'thinking'.

loves to ruminate—This is the time when the 'thinking' faculty becomes predominant in him.

such dreaming high—such noble thinking.

l 8. **Is nearest unto Heaven**—gets nearest to the Gods. It is the thinking faculty that allies man to God; without it he will be a mere animal. It is in these highest flights of thought that man manifests that Divine spark which is the central fact of his life. The greater a man's capacity for right and noble thinking the nearer is he to Heaven.

quiet coves—silent retreats or caves among the rocks. In the Autumn of his existence Man leaves off his vigorous life and tends more and more to withdraw into silent retreats. He has no longer the strength and virility to engage in the battle of life. The struggle in any event has lost its zest for him.

l 10. **he furleth close**—The metaphor of the flight of a bird. He folds his wings closely about him; for he cannot go in for soaring flights hereafter. His days are drawing to a close and he must have rest. Not merely can he not fly but he also feels the need for pro-

tection, and hence his wings he closely folds over his body.

l 11. **On mists in idleness**—content to look on idly at the sights and sounds of earth which have grown dim and obscured to his sight, as if a mist has closed over the beauties of the earth. The youthful enthusiasms for the beauties of the earth are not his any longer.

l 12. **unheeded as a threshold brook**—paying no more attention to them than he would to a familiar stream that runs just in front of his door. Even any natural beauties that the stream might have will have been obscured by reason of our familiarity with it. There cannot be that thrill of pleasure at the sight of a stream passing by our doors, as we will experience if it is far away from the haunts of men. In that case mere distance will lend enchantment to it,

l 13. **pale misfeature**—his old age when his features alter from beauty to ugliness and the freshness of the colour of the face gives place to a melancholy paleness.

[*misfeature*—a word coined by keats].

l 14. If this were not to happen then man will escape his mortal nature. The paleness is the first touch of the hands of Death: and soon thereafter there comes the end.

Sir Edwin Arnold
Light of Asia

INTRODUCTION

1. BIOGRAPHICAL.

Sir Edwin Arnold, (1832-1904). poet and journalist, was born on the 10th of June 1832 and was educated at the King's School, Rochester: King's College, London: and University College. Oxford, in which last in 1852 he gained the Newdigate Prize for a poem on Belthazzar's Feast. On leaving Oxford he became a schoolmaster and went to India as Principal of the Government Sanskrit College at Poona, a post which ho held during the Mutiny of 1857, when he was able to render services for which he was publicly thanked by Lord Elphinstone in the Bombay Council. Returning to England in 1861 he worked as a journalist on the staff of the *Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper with which he continued to be associated for more than forty years. The genuine loyalty and real affection that he had for his office are indicated in his having been once reported to have said that whether the chief—whom we loved—asked him (Arnold) to write the first leading article, the description of some great Historical event, or an ordinary news paragraph, he would do it to the utmost of his ability; that the test of loyalty

was not to do some big thing, but some small thing, and to do it well. It was also he who, on behalf of the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph*, in conjunction with the *New York Herald*, arranged for the journey of H. M. Stanley to Africa to discover the course of the Congo; and Stanley named after him a mountain to the north-east of Albert Edward Nyanza. Arnold must also be credited with the first idea of a great trunk line traversing the entire African continent; for in 1874 he first employed the phrase "a Cape to Cairo Railway" subsequently popularised by Cecil Rhodes.

It was, however, as a poet that he was best known to his contemporaries. *The Light of Asia* appeared in 1879 and was an immediate success, going through numerous editions both in England and America. It is an Indian epic, dealing with the life and teaching of The Buddha, which are expounded with much wealth of local colour and not a little felicity of versification. The poem contains many lines of unquestionable beauty; and its immediate popularity was rather increased than diminished by the twofold criticism to which it was subjected. On the one hand it was held by Oriental scholars to give a not altogether correct impression of Buddhist doctrine; while, on the other, the suggested analogy between Sakyamuni and Christ offended the taste of some devout Christians. The latter criticism probably suggested to Arnold the idea of attempting a second narrative poem of which the central figure should be the founder of Christianity, as the founder of Buddhism had been that of the first. But though *The Light*

of the World (1891), in which this idea tock shape, had considerable poetic merit, it lacked the novelty of theme and setting which had given the earlier poem much of its attractiveness; and it failed to receive the success attained by *The Light of Asia.*

Arnold's other principal volumes of poetry were *Indian Song of Songs* (1875), *Pearls of the Faith* (1883), *The Song Celestial* (1885), *With Sadi in the Garden* (1888), *Potiphar's Wife* (1892), and *Adzuma* (1893). In his later years Arnold resided for some time in Japan, and his third wife was a Japanese lady. In *Seas and Lands* (1891) and *Japonica* [1892] he gives an interesting study of Japanese life. He received the order of C.S.I in 1887, and in 1888 was created K. C. I. E. He also possessed decorations conferred by the rulers of Japan, Persia, Turkey and Siam. He died on the 24th March, 1904.

Arnold deserves to be remembered as one of the pre-eminent poets of the last generation who have contributed to Anglo-Indian Literature. As a poet, journalist and man of letters, he belongs mainly to the history of English Literature proper and he wrote all his best work long after his departure from India. But his subsequent life, and almost the whole of his subsequent work, bore predominant impress of his Indian experience. As an unwearied and tasteful translator of Indian proetry into English verse, Arnold is unrivalled and possesses an assured place in English Literature, while as regards his

most original work, *The Light of Asia*, India may justly claim to have inspired some of its noblest passages, though perhaps, she is responsible for its exotic and sometimes cloying sweetness.

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